

# Sight & Sound

Monthly  
Film Review

May

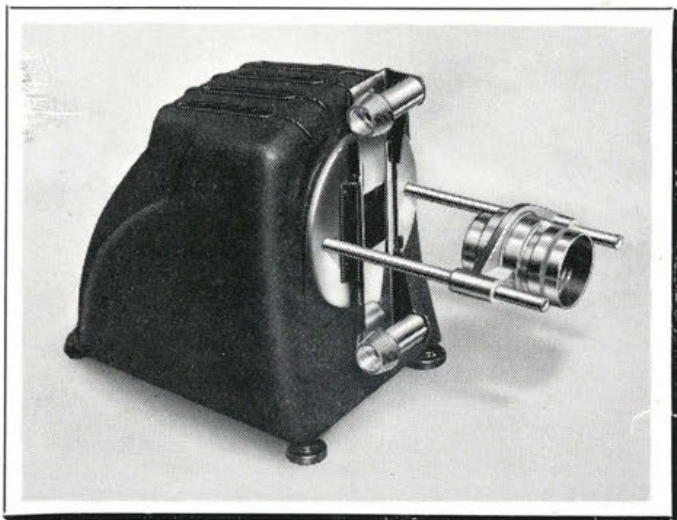
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## ROUND TABLE ON BRITISH FILMS

Henry Cornelius, Thorold Dickinson, Rosamund John,  
Anthony Havelock-Allan, Frank Launder, Rachael Low,  
George Minter, Guy Morgan, Basil Wright





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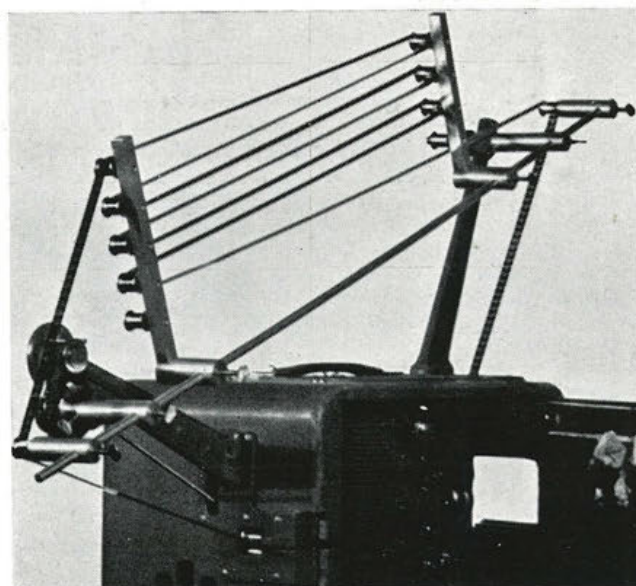
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1950		1951
September 5, 7	<b>Foundations of Drama</b> LUMIERE PROGRAMME, 1895 GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, 1903 RESCUED BY ROVER, 1904 MODERN BRIGANDAGE, 1908 MARCUS LYCINIUS, 1910 THE OLD ACTOR, 1910	
September 12, 14	<b>Foundations of Comedy</b> BEGINNINGS OF THE CINEMA, 1896-1900 WELL-WASHED HOUSE, 1907 PUMPKIN RACE, 1908 WOULD-BE JUGGLER, 1908 FOOLSHEAD, KING OF REPORTERS, 1909 GOLF GAME & THE BONNET, 1914 TANGO TANGLE, 1914 STORY OF A GLOVE, 1916 THE CHEF, 1919	
September 19, 21	<b>Foundations of Fantasy</b> EARLY TRICK FILMS, 1895-1912 VOYAGE ACROSS THE IMPOSSIBLE, 1904 DRAWINGS THAT WALK & TALK, 1906-33	
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October 17, 19 October 24, 26 October 31, November 2	<b>American Comedy</b> DOUGH AND DYNAMITE, 1916 THE CHAMPION, 1915 THE IDLE CLASS, 1921 SAFETY LAST, 1923 LONG PANTS, 1927	
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	<b>The British Film</b> COMIN' THRO' THE RYE, 1923 THE LODGER, 1926 BATTLE OF CORONEL & FALKLAND ISLANDS, 1927 SHOOTING STARS, 1928	February 13, 15 February 20, 22 February 27, March 1 March 6, 8
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# Sight & Sound

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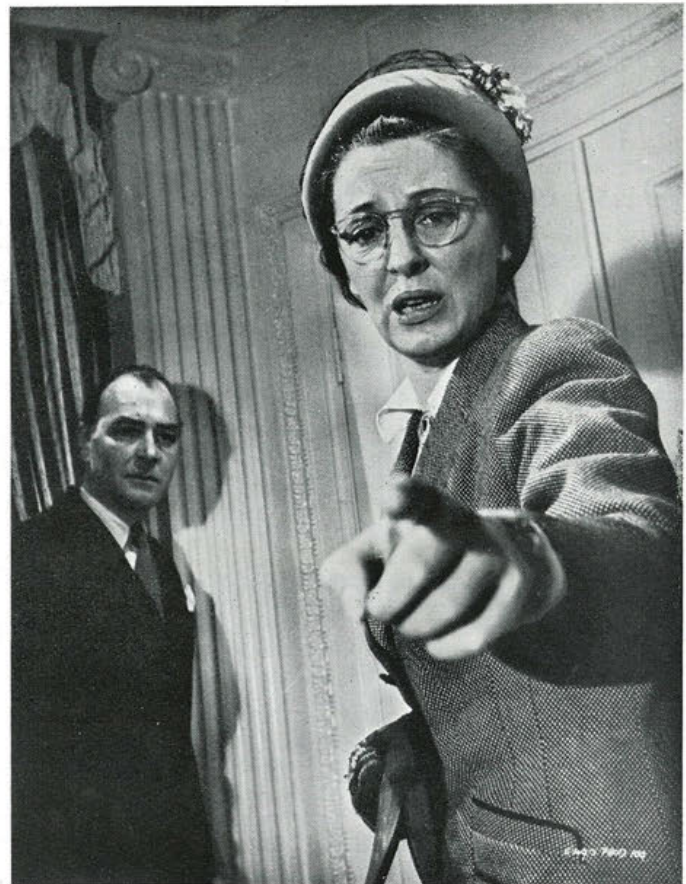
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## Stage Fright



Pictures from Alfred Hitchcock's latest film suggest a happy return to his earlier manner. *Stage Fright* was made in England last year, with an Anglo-American cast including Marlene Dietrich, Richard Todd (right), Jane Wyman and Alastair Sim (above). The ten-minute take has been abandoned, the minor characters look promising, and there is a climactic scene at a theatrical garden party.









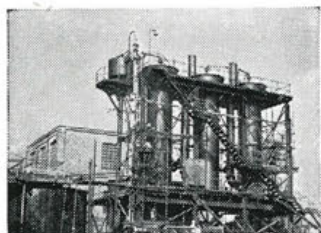
# FILMS *of an Industry*

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# The Front Page

MANY PEOPLE IN LONDON have expressed regret that there is nothing here to correspond with the Museum of Modern Art's repertory cinema in New York, which makes available to the public a good number of film classics formerly reposing in archives. Now, enthusiasts who want another look at various important films, and perhaps to see others that they have missed, will be pleased to learn that the British Film Institute is inaugurating a permanent repertory programme, drawn from the archives of the National Film Library. In the first year, about fifty outstanding films will be shown.

These programmes, arranged by Ernest Lindgren, will be screened on two evenings of each week for members of the Institute, in the Institute's private theatre. The repertory begins in May: after a summer recess for July and August, it will start again for ten months as from September. In the first complete cycle, a survey of the development of the cinema, from Lumière's first experiments in 1895 to the beginnings of sound in the early 1930's, will take in the major works of Griffith and Eisenstein, early comedies by Chaplin, Langdon and Harold Lloyd, selected silent films by such directors as Lang, Dreyer, Hitchcock, Asquith, Pudovkin, Clair, L'Herbier, Feyder and Flaherty: the early sound period will include Pabst's *Dreigroschenoper* and *Kameradschaft*, and Clair's *Le Million*.

There will be several new films added to the programmes every season, and the series is designed eventually to comprise a full permanent repertory of films important in the history and art of the cinema. A complete guide to the first season will be found on page 98.

A duty in out-of-work hours for some critics recently has been the rescuing of an occasional film of quality from the obscurity to which exigencies of distributors have consigned it. Encouraged by the Academy cinema's successful showing of *They Live by Night* and *The Window*, a critical *entente cordiale* comprising the editors of this magazine and of *Sequence*, together with Richard Winnington of the *News Chronicle*, has recently brought two more pictures, *Letter from an Unknown Woman* and *Moonrise*, to the attention of the public. Once again, the Academy has taken a lead by showing *Moonrise*, while another specialised cinema has booked *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (both these films, incidentally, will also be made available to film societies through the Film Institute). These films may or may not be good for normal showings by the major circuits—though films previously rejected have done well, as did the Academy's earlier double bill where shown by independent cinemas up and down the country. In any case, when shown at a specialist cinema normally devoted to continental films, they are brought to the attention of the audiences they deserve. For once, congratulations seem to be called for all round.

During the Round Table debate which appears in another part of this issue, several film-makers mentioned the over-all costliness of production in this country,



and the obstacles to economy. Exact figures about the costs of films are always difficult to come by, but the following figures on a few recent films have been garnered by devious means, and may be taken as reasonably accurate. (One or two may be wrong by a thousand or two—but what, on this level, do a few thousands matter?)

<i>Jour de Fête</i> ...	...	...	£15,000
<i>Bicycle Thieves</i> ...	...	...	£18,000
<i>Au delà des grilles</i> ...	...	...	£35,000
<i>The Window</i> ...	...	...	£40,000
<i>Whisky Galore</i> ...	...	...	£100,000
<i>Madeleine</i> ...	...	...	£400,000
<i>The Third Man</i> ...	...	...	£500,000

A few extempore calculations on these figures reflect the fantastic anomaly of the whole position. *Au delà des grilles*, for example, was made (mostly on location in Genoa) for a sum slightly exceeding that of Stewart Granger's salary for one year. For the cost of *Whisky Galore* (a non-studio British film), you could have made *Bicycle Thieves*, *Au delà des Grilles* and *The Window* in their respective countries. The total cost of the first four films on the list is slightly over half that of *Madeleine*, and under half that of *The Third Man*.

It costs an independent producer in Britain today about £2,000 a week to rent a fair-sized studio (just the studio—nothing else). Eight weeks' lease of a studio by itself, then, is more than the total cost of *Jour de Fête*. . . . And, as a final thought, you could have made all these seven films for the cost of *Caesar and Cleopatra*, and still have nearly £200,000 to spare.

The announcement that Irene Dunne is arriving in this country to appear as Queen Victoria in a film to be produced here by 20th Century-Fox has caused some lively controversy. The issue has been divided equally between the possibility that Miss Dunne will be miscast in such a rôle, and the fact that it is being taken by an American actress at all. The second question does not stop at national pride; it has renewed discussion as to the desirability of importing so many American players into our studios.

If American companies are to make pictures here at all, it is hardly surprising that American stars are brought over to appear in them—and we, at the moment, are not in a strong position to make terms. With as many stages in as

many studios as idle as they were a few months ago, it is surely better that a number of British technicians and feature players should be employed by Americans than that they should not be employed at all.

The question of whether there should be large-scale Government intervention to put an end to this whole state of affairs is an altogether separate one. While the position continues as it is, half a loaf is better than no bread: we may raise an eyebrow when Virginia Mayo is imported to Denham to play opposite Gregory Peck in *Captain Hornblower*, as the aristocratic Lady Barbara Wellesly, but to suggest to the company that they employ British rather than American stars is really to suggest that they cut down considerably potential receipts from the film. As the Americans have rightly pointed out, American stars are necessary to sell the film effectively in the home market. One may criticise this policy on an aesthetic plane, but since it is so clearly straightforwardly commercial, that would seem to be superfluous. And let us set our own house in order before telling the Americans under what conditions they should make films here.

It should not be forgotten also that an English actor (Godfrey Tearle) went to Hollywood not long ago to play Roosevelt. If the Americans can take that (as, ten years ago, they took Vivien Leigh for Scarlett O'Hara), it is up to us to take Irene Dunne as Queen Victoria. Rather than confuse this agreeable star the moment she arrives, by making her the centre of a controversy, we should in fact extend our sympathies to her in the obviously difficult times that lie ahead.

The following is taken from *Today's Cinema*, March 21, 1950:

Dr. P. T. Freeman, M.B.E., J.P., chairman of a juvenile court and headmaster of a school at Winchester, told a meeting recently that youngsters are "soaked in the pictures". He told of a girl who had explained "it was so nice sitting in the park after dark with an American because it felt like holding the hand of Clark Gable". Is there anything wrong with that anyway that's not a normal adolescent instinct?

Psychologists as well as sociologists will surely be disturbed by this expression of trade opinion. Clark Gable is 49. . . .

## CONTRIBUTORS

PAUL BLOOMFIELD. Author and critic. Books include "William Morris", "Half the Battle", "The Many and the Few"; reviews for *Time and Tide*, etc.

CATHERINE DE LA ROCHE. Critic, lecturer, broadcaster. Film articles for C.O.I. and in various publications.

FRANK HAUSER. Producer for B.B.C. Recently, "Three Sisters", "Alcestis".

ANTONY HOPKINS. Composer; many radio features, including "Moby Dick"; opera, "Lady Rohesia"; film, *Vice Versa*.

ROGER MANVELL. Author of *Film* (Pelican); editor of National Cinema Series for Falcon Press, and of *Experiment in the Film*. Director of the British Film Academy.

JEAN QUEVAL. French critic and journalist. Reviews for *L'Ecran Français*: author of recent book on Jacques Becker.

PAUL ROTH. Producer and director of many documentaries—*World of Plenty*, *A City Speaks*, etc.; film critic of *Public Opinion*; books include "The Film Till Now", "Movie Parade" (both recently republished).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Stills:

BRITISH LION FILM CORP. for *Chance of a Lifetime*.

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SACHA GORDINE for *La Ronde*, *La Marie du Port*.

FILMS ARIANE for *Orphée*, *Les Parents Terribles*.

LUX FILMS for *Senza Pieta*.

SOCIETY FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS WITH U.S.S.R. for photographs of Eisenstein's stage productions.

Material:

HARCOURT BRACE and DENNIS DOBSON for Eisenstein's article from *Film Form*.

## CORRESPONDENTS

U.S.A.: Harold Leonard.

FRANCE: Francis Koval.

ITALY: Frances Mullin Clark.



# FILM WEEK IN CANNES

Catherine de la Roche



*A location from "La Marie du Port".*

ARRIVING IN Cannes (somewhat shaken after Air France had brought us, by what seemed a miracle of *sang froid*, through a murderous Alpine blizzard), I fervently hoped that the function I was to attend, as guest of the French cinema, would prove worth while. This was the inaugural Congress of the International Federation of Film Producers' Associations, and the *Grande Semaine du Film Français*. Coming so soon after the international festival held at Cannes last autumn, neither event had aroused much editorial interest before my departure. "It'll be the same old thing", they said in Fleet Street. It was not. Both events produced new and interesting developments.

Within two of the three days allotted for discussion, the congress reached agreement in principle on all the issues raised. M. Charles Delac, founder of a similar organization before the war, was elected President d'Honneur for the first year. He laid particular emphasis on the goodwill that had typified the meetings. "There are moments in history", he said, "when identical problems and the same approach to their solution exist in many parts of the world. All that is needed to crystallize them and reveal the common purpose is for those concerned to come together. This is what has happened now in Cannes. Our unanimity will give us strength as a federation".

Fifteen nations are at present represented: Britain, France, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Israel and Egypt. Eugene Van Dee of the M.P.A.A. attended as a sympathetic observer for the U.S.A. All film producing countries, it is hoped, will eventually join; several Latin American representatives are expected to take part at the next meeting, which will be held in Madrid, in May.

The Federation's aims, purposely formulated in comprehensive terms, are, briefly, to study all production problems common to the member nations, to harmonise

international relations between producers, and to exchange information. Essentially a co-operative, not a restrictive, organisation, the Federation, while naturally concerned to protect the cinema's interests, aims above all at facilitating its external contacts, be they with the other arts, the law, or governments, to the mutual advantage of all concerned.

Television was one of the chief subjects on the agenda and—while recognizing the present need for producers to safeguard their interests by delaying the televising of new pictures for a period of, say, five years—the congress attached greater importance to studying means of collaboration in the development of T.V. and to defining the relationship between the two media. It was agreed that no country should enter into exclusive T.V. contracts. Specific problems connected with issues such as home and theatrical televising of pictures, and the production of T.V. films, were discussed, and terms of reference defined for their further study, preparatory to tackling precise decisions. A lead from the British Film Producers' Association, which has not as yet evolved a detailed T.V. policy, is awaited with interest.

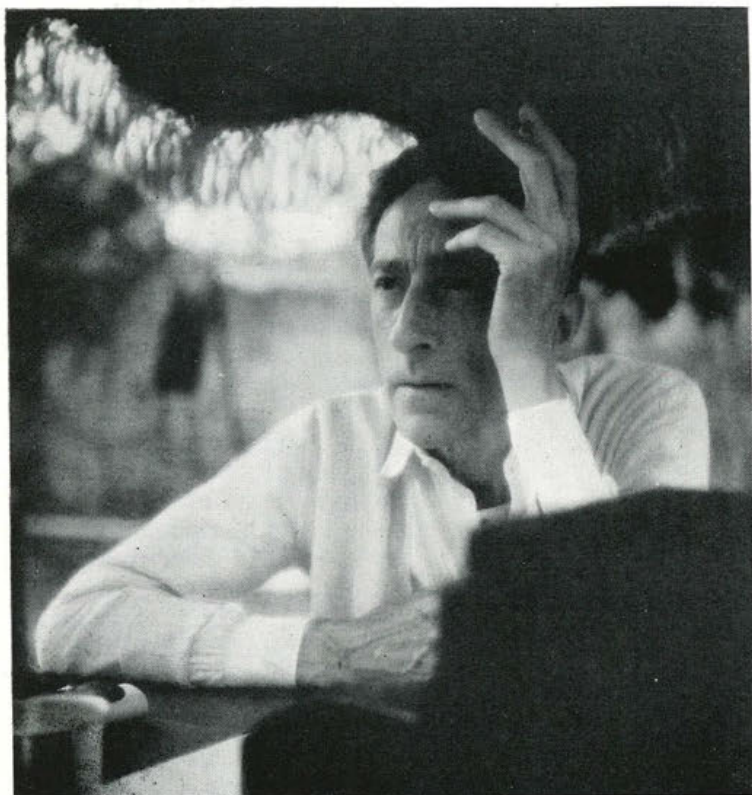
The other major subject on the agenda was authors' rights. The Berne Convention is hardly ever applicable, since it was drawn up before the existence of the cinema, with its collective authorship and ownership. With the aid of a legal adviser, the congress studied points which need clarification, such as the interpretation of the term *author* in cinema, and to whom it should apply, and investigated means to protect the moral and professional interests of various film makers as regards cuts and alterations. The German delegate raised the question of censorship and its possible international co-ordination. Special commissions have been appointed to study and produce recommendations on all the subjects debated.

The first of these commissions to go into session, on





Above: "Orphee". The angel (François Perier), the poet's wife (Marie Dea), and the poet (Jean Marais). Below: a recent picture of Jean Cocteau.



the spot, was one appointed on the proposal of Sir Duff Cooper, delegate of the B.F.P.A. and Vice-President of the Federation's Committee; to co-ordinate the annual festivals. It was readily agreed that, if these manifestations were to retain any meaning, their number should be limited, subject to the approval of the governments concerned. At present the only competitive event planned for 1950 is the Venice Festival, at which the Federation will meet again to seek a final solution. Whether Italy, who originated the institution before the war, will relinquish what she appears to regard as a priority right, and take turns with other nations, or at least revert to her early practice of biannual film festivals, remains to be seen. Cannes has meanwhile announced its next festival for 1951. The Federation, at any rate, has now the power to determine which competitions it will recognize.

Four of the five pictures of the *Semaine* are obviously commercial. This is a symptom of the crisis which, incidentally, partly owing to the administration of State aid, has created a curious situation in the French cinema: inflated production (bringing the total to 103 features last year) by a multitude of new independent producers.

*Prelude à la Gloire*, with Roberto Benzi, the famous ten-year-old orchestra conductor, enacting a dramatized version of his biography, and *Rendez-vous Avec la Chance*, about a humdrum little man who lacks the audacity and callousness to grasp a chance to realize his romantic dreams at another's expense, do not rise above the average. *La Valse de Paris* is a stylised musical with Pierre Fresnay giving a delightful, lightly caricatured portrayal of Offenbach, and Yvonne Printemps, all grace and waywardness and *allur*, as his elusive prima donna—very much the right sort of box office.

As for *La Marie du Port*—were it not Carné's new film, one would note gratefully the well directed performance of Nicole Courcel, seductively equivocal, the authentic Channel port environment and witty dialogue, and say that a slight, unambitious subject had been ably handled. But, remembering the deeper tones of Carné's *films noirs*—*Quai des Brumes*, *Le Jour se Lève*—and contrasting (unfairly) Gabin the young outlaw with Gabin mellowed, humorous and eligible, one feels that Carné should do better things. This is, however, no criticism of the film in itself.

*La Marie du Port*, a love story without murders and with a happy ending, is, as Carné (who was at Cannes) said, a new departure for him. Though the milieu is similar to that of earlier films, he has endeavoured to treat it differently and to achieve a comedy tone. Referring to his work generally, he said: "One expresses oneself through the air of the times. If I were to remake *Les Visiteurs du Soir* to-day, I should get rid of the now dated aestheticism and the ballet motif, and would be more concerned with warm humanity". Of his own films he prefers, without being satisfied with any of them, *Drôle de Drame*, *Le Jour se Lève*, *Les Enfants du Paradis*, and *Les Portes de la Nuit*. But at present he is utterly engrossed in scripting a subject he has longed to film since before the war—*Juliette ou la Clef des Songes*, by Georges Neveux—a return to *le fantastique social*, but not, according to him, a *film noir*.

Cocteau's *Orphée* was aptly described, in a talk by Georges Charensol, as one of the three recent *films locomotives* (the others being *Rendez-vous de Juillet* and *La*

(Continued on page 122)



# INTERVIEW WITH DIETERLE

Francis Koval



*William Dieterle on location for "Vulcano".*

IN THE EARLY TWENTIES, when the public's attention was not focused on the personalities of film directors at all and when their names were hardly known outside the small circle of the "initiated", a young and successful actor had the ambition to become a film director. The young actor was a broadshouldered German with the name of Wilhelm Dieterle. He stood six feet high, but his powerfully built body seemed in direct contrast to the expression on his round face, which was that of an innocent, happy child, with a disarming smile. From his early youth he had a burning passion for acting, and once on the stage of the Mannheim Theatre, just across the river from his native Ludvigshaven, he showed signs of undeniable talent. This was his first step on the rickety ladder of his chosen career—just after his return from the first World War.

In the incredibly vigorous revival of artistic life, characteristic of that period, Dieterle quickly rose to fame through talent, enthusiasm and hard work. His best chance came when Max Reinhardt, the most distinguished theatrical producer of post-war Germany, gave him a contract

to appear on the Berlin stage. He soon played parts such as Danton or Brutus opposite a number of prominent actors. (In that production of "Julius Caesar", for instance, Alexander Moissi took the part of Marc Antonius, and Werner Krauss that of Caesar.)

But on the screen he was mostly seen in parts of country yokels and simpletons, which he played with great gusto and to the public's enormous delight. It sounds almost paradoxical, but it was just his popularity that prevented him from putting into practice his dream of directing. No producer wanted to listen to his suggestions. After all, Dieterle's name printed in big letters on top of the bill spelled box office attraction, but the same name placed in small print under the heading "directed by" wouldn't be worth even the printing ink—so the producers argued.

One of the last films in which Dieterle achieved great success in 1928, just before the imminent onslaught of the "talkies" and his own departure from Germany was *Die Heilige und ihr Narr* (*The Saint and Her Fool*). It seems somehow significant that he closed his comparatively short but brilliant film-acting career creating the moving



and deeply human character of the "Narr"—the Fool.

A year or so later he went to Hollywood, attracted by the offer to direct a German version of an American film. He grabbed, of course, the chance finally to do a job he felt was really his, but little did he suspect that America was to become his new home. At that time, it must be remembered, the technical and artistic level of the German cinema was such that Hollywood could easily take a few lessons from the major exponents of the Berlin school. Dieterle's calm and efficient manner, coupled with his youthful enthusiasm, impressed the American producers. When Warner Bros. suggested a long-term contract, he eagerly accepted, forsaking without regret his commitments in Berlin, where the first ominous thunderclaps already announced the oncoming storm. Soon Hollywood was to know the influx of outstanding film people fleeing from the Nazi oppression. But for the moment Dieterle had the great advantage of being without competition. Apart from Emil Jannings, enjoying his enormous success in *The Last Command*, hardly a German name was to be found on the credit titles.

Some forty film titles bear witness to Dieterle's activity between then and now. The first eight or ten of them, it is true, have long been forgotten and will certainly never adorn the catalogue of a respectable film library. But in directing them he gained the experience he needed and established his reputation of being extremely scrupulous, not fussy at all on the floor, and always dead on time within the schedule.

In 1934 he welcomed his former benefactor, Max Reinhardt, in Hollywood, and was soon to assist him in an ambitious project: the screen version of *A Midsummer*

*Night's Dream*. This was Reinhardt's first (and last!) film venture. Knowing practically nothing of the technical intricacies inherent in American studio work, he availed himself largely of Dieterle's collaboration. The latter was responsible, incidentally, for giving Mickey Rooney his first big chance in the part of Puck.

No wonder that very soon Dieterle was handling the most outstanding Hollywood actors: Paul Muni in *The Story of Louis Pasteur* and *The Life of Emile Zola*, Edward G. Robinson in the role of Dr. Ehrlich, Bette Davis in *Juarez* (also with Muni), Henry Fonda in *Blockade*—not to mention Laughton in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and Dietrich in *Kismet*.

When the first refugees from Nazi Germany arrived in Hollywood, he was already well established and able to help a great many of his former colleagues. He himself, of course, as well as his wife, the German actress Charlotte Hagenbruch, were according to Hitler's terminology "pure Aryans", but abhorring the Nazi regime they decided to stay on and become American citizens. The personal habits and way of life of William (as he was now called) Dieterle were, however, not affected in the least by his change of nationality. He always ridiculed the "swell guys" who after a few years in America put on airs of Yankees born and bred, and always insisted on speaking German to those whose mother-tongue it was. In his early days he had been known for being absolutely unable to grapple with money problems, an easy prey for any friend who wanted to "plug" him. He stayed that way and left all the financial arrangements to his wife; as for his readiness to help people—it has become almost proverbial.

In review, William Dieterle's work strikes the critic more often as being extremely competent than as being inspired. He has been condemned (the reasons remain obscure) to too many potboilers, from *Another Dawn* in 1937 to *Rope of Sand* last year; but at times, and with a good subject, he shows genuine creative talent. Apart from the biographical films with Muni, one remembers most of all his vivid treatment of Stephen Vincent Benet's Faust story, *All That Money Can Buy* (1941), with Walter Huston and Simone Simon. His *Portrait of Jennie*, for which Joseph Cotten won the acting award at the Venice Festival last year, displays considerable virtuosity.

Judging by his enthusiasm, and what he told me about his latest undertaking, when I talked to him in Venice, I had the impression that his film *Vulcano* with Anna Magnani in the main part, might well bear a distinctive personal touch as well as technical accomplishment.

Back from the Lipari Islands with the last shot "in the can", very tanned, and with the unchanged disarming smile on his much less rotund face, he said:

"The life and work on our tiny island was really great fun. I certainly could have made much more money in Hollywood during that time, but I could hardly have had such fun. When I first received the 10-page synopsis of the subject sent to me by the scriptwriter and co-producer Renzo Avanzo, I had the feeling that this was a challenge to make a worth-while film without all the technical resources



Paul Muni (right) in "*The Life of Emile Zola*".



of a Hollywood studio. That is why I accepted. After all, technique is so much over-estimated nowadays, and I want to make pictures which should stimulate the eyes and the minds of people. Tackling one subject after another on the studio floor can become a routine job—one develops the mental attitude of 'sitting back'.

"The life on Vulcano—that's the name of our island—was certainly different. We had to rough it for three months or so, and we all thoroughly enjoyed it. I had about 25 people with me and we had to bring from the mainland everything we needed: not only the cameras and the usual paraphernalia, but even our own generators to provide the current, and all the food for the unit. We even had to build our own pier to land all the heavy equipment.

"A number of people warned me against all these difficulties, convinced that I would give up sooner or later. But against all expectations everything went off smoothly, and in forty-five days we finished our shooting, strictly within schedule. This includes twelve days of underwater shooting which was done without diver suits and with the help of a tiny special camera built by Italian technicians in Palermo. They and the other members of my unit—all Italians—proved such an excellent team that I didn't know whether to admire more their skill or their daring. These shots of sponge-fishing on the rocky sea-bed were pretty tricky, and the sequences involving rock-fall and the eruption of a volcano were really fraught with dangers.

"In the mass-scenes and many minor episodes the whole population of the island took part. In some cases we even brought over the fisher-folk from the neighbouring islands. The strange life of these extremely poor people fascinated me, and it forms a very colourful background to our story. The little villages are practically run by women whose husbands and fathers have emigrated to America or New Zealand. Emigrated is, of course, a wrong word. They have gone abroad in order to provide money for the family and to come back with some savings. They always return, sometimes after five or ten years, sometimes after twenty-five, and sometimes—in their coffins. One such tragic return occurred during our stay on the island, and it figures in our picture."

I was, of course, very interested to learn Dieterle's opinion on the Rossellini picture, *Stromboli*, shot on another rugged island of the same archipelago with Ingrid Bergman in the part originally intended for Anna Magnani. I asked if it would turn out a dangerous competitor to his own work.

With an eloquent movement of his hand, Dieterle dismissed such a suggestion:

"The fact that both films are based on a similar story doesn't mean a thing", he said. "There isn't an original subject under the sun any more, and everything depends on the treatment. If Rossellini's film turns out better than



Walter Huston as the devil and James Craig as his victim in "All that Money can Buy".

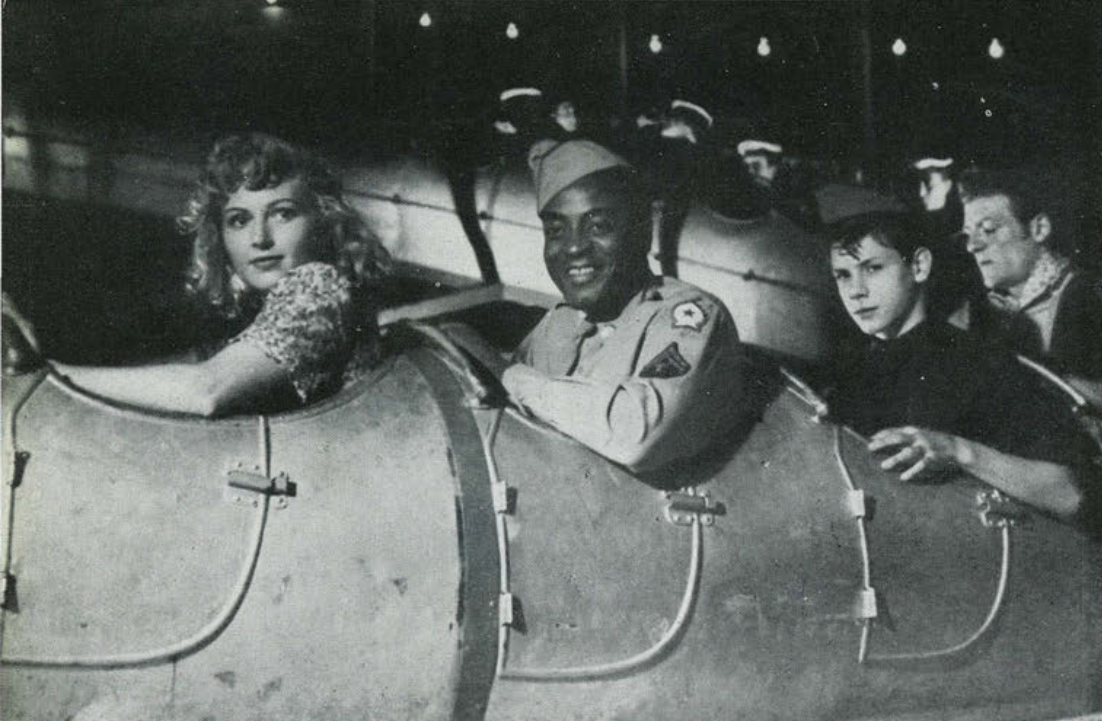
mine, well—may the better man win. But our two stories will be as different from each other as my personality is from Rossellini's and Anna Magnani's acting from Ingrid Bergman's. There was a time when Sarah Bernhardt played 'La Dame aux Camélias' in one theatre, and Eleonora Duse played it in another. People interested in art went to see both, not with the intention of deciding which performance was 'better', but simply to enjoy the different style and conception of acting. More recently, we had two different 'Hamlets' on Broadway at the same time, and both theatres were packed. So now we will have two pictures with an erupting volcano in the background: *Vulcano* and *Stromboli*".

Anna Magnani was much more uncompromising in her comments. Her southern temperament obviously had the better of her.

"Rossellini has betrayed my trust", she declared, "I never want to see him again or hear his name mentioned. *Vulcano* is my own story, and if he is using it without my consent, it certainly won't bring him any luck. He will have to change it, of course, because the main part was 'made to measure', and one can't imagine a Swedish American girl playing an Italian slut. So let him have his own way, and I'll have mine. The world will judge".

Working in Europe seems to have given William Dieterle a lot of satisfaction. So much so that he is looking forward to another visit. He has to finish first the Hal Wallis production *September*, starring Joseph Cotten, Joan Fontaine, and Francoise Rosay. But then we may hope to see him again this side of the Atlantic. He has agreed to direct Edana Romney and Robert Newton in *Rachel*, a biography of the famous actress. It will be made, in Technicolor, in a Paris studio.





## News from . . .

Alberto Lattuada's "Senza Pietà", set in post-war Leghorn, will be seen later this year in London. Carla del Poggio as the white girl and John Kitzmiller as the negro soldier.

### ROME

THE FIRST QUARTER of 1950 shows no slackening in Italy's prodigious output. At present, 41 films are having first-run distribution in the country, and 75 more are in production or being edited. Nearly all the leading directors (unlike those in France) are at work; much interest is now focussed on Rossellini's new production, *S. Francesco—Giullare de Dio* (St. Francis—Jester of God). Scheduled for more than a year, this picture has in the meantime suffered the usual vicissitudes that surround all Rossellini's enterprises.

The original idea was to make a psychological study of St. Francis the man, by concentrating on four episodes taken from the book "The Little Flowers of St. Francis". With Rossellini's resistance to a formal script, anything might emerge; he builds up his film as he goes along. A village near Viterbo, the Franciscan country of Umbria, has been chosen for the story's setting. The only professional actor with the unit is Aldo Fabrizi, in the role of the Tyrant of Viterbo, Ferruccio. The rest of the cast has been chosen from local peasants and the monks of a Franciscan monastery. Rossellini selected his players for their likeness to the illustrations in "The Little Flowers of St. Francis". Fra Nazario, who plays St. Francis, was cast for his resemblance to the portrait painted by Giotto, which has also served as a guide for costumes and settings.

The first scenes, shot in the Manziana woods, presented difficulties with the non-professional players. Being the first time that the Church has officially sanctioned its officials to play in a film, the Brothers were overwhelmed with self-consciousness. Fra Nazario suffered particularly from this, and it was only the persuasion of his superiors that it was his sacred duty to go on that made him continue with the part.

One episode, called *The Most Terrible Adventure of Fra Ginepro with the Tyrant at Viterbo*, is already finished. Last to be shot will be the episode in which Santa Chiara appears; her role has not been filled, though a girl student from the local college is under consideration. Fellini,

Rossellini's favourite writer (he appeared as the fake St. Joseph in *The Miracle*), is working on the script, and Otello Martelli, cameraman of *Bitter Rice*, is in charge of photography.

FRANCES MULLIN CLARK.

### PARIS

IN SPITE OF the severe financial crisis which has been ravaging the French film industry over the last few years, an air of optimism is now blowing through the cinema world of Paris. This is not simply the psychological effect of spring sunshine gilding the pavements of the Champs Elysées, but mainly the result of two legislative acts from which the trade is expecting a great deal.

First, the existence of the *Fonds d'Aide*—the opposite number of the British Film Finance Corporation—has been prolonged by another three years, to the 30th September, 1953; and, at the same time, the maximum for loans granted to producers by this institution has been increased. This Assistance Fund was called into existence in September, 1948, by the Act on temporary help to the cinema, and has during the last two years achieved considerable success—to which production figures bear witness; 93 feature films in 1948, and 98 in 1949. The basis of this organisation, however, and its method of working, differ remarkably from the set-up of the British N.F.F.C.

It seems a sensible solution that the necessary funds should be provided indirectly by the film trade itself. So French law provides for payment of a *Taxe de Sortie de Films*, which amounts to 400 francs per metre of a French-speaking picture (including dubbed films), while much lower rates are fixed for original foreign versions and for shorts up to 1,300 metres in length. Apart from this, a supplement of 5 or 10 francs is charged (according to the seat price) on every cinema ticket bought, and thus paid directly by the public. These comparatively small contributions (5 francs correspond roughly to a penny) help to swell the fund to a far greater degree than the tax due from distributors.

According to a report just published, the Assistance Fund during the first fifteen months of its existence has



amassed 2,500 million francs, of which 2,100 million came straight from the box-office takings of nearly 6,000 French cinemas. Producing companies received over 1,000 million of this in loans, and 355 million went to cinema-owners to help them rebuild and modernise their halls. As the cost of film-making is much lower in France than in this country, the sum invested in production corresponds to the cost of 25 pictures. These figures do something to explain the higher spirits among producers at the moment.

The other decree offering new hope to the trade affects the opposite end of the scale—the exhibitors. Since control of admission prices was introduced in 1946, they have been clamouring for freedom to assess the financial possibilities of their public without external interference, because the public's requirements, and what is offered to them, vary greatly from place to place. In view of steadily rising costs, and the Government's persistence in keeping ticket prices on the level fixed in November, 1947, these demands were not without foundation. (The minimum price for a seat had been fixed at 20 francs (about 4d.), and no luxury cinema was allowed to charge more than 150 francs (3s.) for its best seat.)

As box-office takings diminished from month to month during last year, the exhibitors claimed that only abolition of control could halt the slump. And now, as from March 1st, the liberty of fixing admission prices has been restored to the exhibitors. It is still a very limited freedom (which may be as well), restricted by stringent recommendations from the *Fédération des Cinémas*, and more seriously, of course, by an unwritten law of which cinema-owners are very well aware: the public's own purse. But, even so, exhibitors are rejoicing.

Nobody knows yet how the new provisions will work out in practice, but it is assumed that in Paris at least the luxury cinemas will adopt a 20-25 per cent. increase, starting with a minimum price of 140 francs, while local cinemas will probably increase prices by 5 francs on weekdays and 15 over weekends.

At this very opportune moment the "Figaro" has, in a short article, drawn people's attention to the reverse side of the medal, asking straightforwardly: "What is the spectator getting for his money?" It voices the frequent complaints about the inferior quality of supporting programmes, and the length of intervals apparently designed only for a large-scale consumption of choc ices. In France, where the custom of double features has not yet spread, this is a very important point.

In fact, the thriving production of short films—somehow badly neglected and fighting hard for survival in Great Britain—is based mainly on this necessity to provide for thousands of independent cinemas a supporting programme lasting approximately one hour. French distributors have also, of course, to stand up to the competition of American companies, who frequently offer to "throw in" a number of shorts when concluding a deal, especially under the "block-booking" system. It is also true that many of the shorts produced in France are by no means outstanding in quality. On the other hand, however, it is encouraging to see serious producers going adventurously ahead with plans for some extremely interesting 40-minute films for which—I am assured by a British expert—there is no market at all in this country. Of these films, especially two, I shall write in this column next month.

FRANCIS KOVAL.



Max Ophuls is again in the news with the film he is now making in Paris, *La Ronde*, from a play by Schnitzler. Set in Vienna of forty years ago, the romantic-ironic story is of love's continuous cycle, told through the linking episodes of several pairs of lovers. A scintillating cast includes Simone Simon (above, with Ophuls), Simone Signoret and Serge Reggiani (below), Gérard Philipe, Jean-Louis Barrault, Danielle Darrieux, Anton Walbrook, Isa Miranda, Fernand Gravey.







## HOLLYWOOD

**The Glass Menagerie.** Tennessee Williams' acute and touching study of a middle-class American family in decline, seen on the London stage last year, has now been filmed with Jane Wyman as the daughter (seen here), Gertrude Lawrence as the mother, and Kirk Douglas as the gentleman visitor. Irving Rapper directed.

**A Place in the Sun.** The new film of George Stevens (who directed *Talk of the Town*, *The More the Merrier*) promises to be of great interest. It is based on Theodore Dreiser's novel "An American Tragedy", about a poor but ambitious boy who, after becoming involved with a girl working in a factory, falls in love with a rich society girl. His former mistress becomes pregnant, and is drowned while on a boating trip with him; the boy is accused and convicted of murdering her. The story (adapted by Harry Brown and Michael Wilson) has been made contemporary, and much of the film was made on location: the scene in the boat on the lake, culminating in the girl's death, runs for more than ten minutes in one set-up. Montgomery Clift and Shelley Winters (seen here) play the boy and the factory girl, and Elizabeth Taylor the socialite.





# Second Opinion

## MILD EXPOSTULATIONS

Paul Bloomfield

I HAVE NEVER GONE ON an impulse, after seeing a stage show, to try my luck at the stage door with a beautiful lady of the chorus, but it seems to me one of the deplorable things about the cinema that there is no such risk to be run there. One's heart may be lost to a celluloid imposter, apparently before one's eyes, though probably she is several thousand miles away, possibly in her grave. This strikes me as offensive to our humanity. A fact about myself? It is more than that.

For in general the illusionist aspect of films is part and parcel of the second-hand living we get so much of in the modern world. This is a provoking cause of a disease that has many unfortunate symptoms. After the division of labour, the fragmentation of personality. The other day Mr. Basil Henriques was speaking about a London girl who had said her wishes came true when she was sitting in the dark with her hand in a G.I.'s and Gary Cooper's accent in her ears. There must be thousands like her. Now this is terrible! There was never a time when some of most people's living was not done by proxy. It seems hard, though, that even the emotional life of so many men and women should be so much delegated to "stars".

Still, time and habit have accustomed me to enjoy an occasional good idiotic film—like almost everyone else. The worst of it is coming out into the street again. And this, I dare say, is what demoralises: the return to so-called "reality", after mixing with millionaires and boozing with Bohemians—in "attics" that couldn't be rented in London for less than £500 a year. Indeed, one test (mind you, only one) of a good film is possibly being able to answer Yes to the question: When it is over do you think of it as detached from yourself, finite, an objective thing—I won't say "work of art" yet—rather than a kind of *atmosphere*? You may of course want to see it again another time, from start to finish: quite different from wishing you were still wallowing in it *now*.

Though I don't think the sentiments in my first paragraphs could just as well have been left out, I should agree that the most important consideration after fifty years of the cinema, and with mankind life-sentenced to it, is how we are to get better films and (yes, of course) raise the level of taste. My own inside knowledge of the industry is trifling. The only time I was involved in the making of a film one of the many parties to the business had a nervous breakdown and mysteriously disappeared: two people (of whom I was one) failed to get cheques owing them: the censorship did not allow the heroine to be shown as pregnant—so obscuring the *dénouement* of a delightful story. But I expect this is nothing to go by. As an occasional member of the audience, however, I can't help noticing that it isn't only our censors but also the directors and script-writers, even the French, who have their unworthy prejudices, and intellectual laziness.

By way of example let me take two scripts by the admirable Prévert, as used by two able directors. The best film I have seen lately is *Les Visiteurs du Soir*. As a *work of art* it holds together, moves to a comparatively slow, regular rhythm without dragging, is well acted and beautifully photographed. It is a film about the Devil. And would you

believe it, God is left out! Anxieties about the reaction of the anti-clerical press perhaps? But what weakness all the same. Another good film: *Les Amants de Vérone*. A clever and moving story on the Romeo and Juliet theme, with, inevitably, a good deal of emphasis of the character of the Juliet girl. The role is played by the very beautiful Anouk, who gives a convincing performance as a maiden gentle, *bien élevée*, unspoilt, compact of right feeling. But how in the world are we to account for her being like this, with the Capulet family (that is to say, the Maglias) consisting entirely of mad people and neurotics, and the woman corresponding to the Nurse a sadist and nymphomaniac of the first order? The Devil without God is not more understandable than personality without reference to nature or nurture. Even Lysenko would hardly care to claim the little Signorina Maglia as an illustration of his curious genetics.

Emphasis on the visual—right, up to a point—and emphasis on the dramatic, are not enough; directors should not feel themselves excused from being intellectually *thorough* when they are treating grown-up themes, which are none the less grown-up if they implicate adolescents. Dr. Joad turned the wireless to good use when he familiarised a nation-wide audience with his "it all depends what you mean by . . .". Has the cinema yet, with a start of twenty years over broadcasting, made any comparable contributions to the public moral experience? Or, in its sphere, has it trained people to be more sensitive artistically and socially?

I believe girls of the unprivileged classes now dress better in some countries as a result of being film-goers, and this would be a kind of progress both artistic and social. Contrariwise, the girls of the privileged class dress like the others, and therefore worse: a kind of regression, artistic and social. Another step . . . and I shall be floundering in the deep waters of sociology. No! Back to the great question: How are we to get more good films, etc.

It is absolutely certain this will not be through any pontificating by anybody, not even by elaborate official or semi-official planning or anything like that. Who planned Groucho Marx? We shall get more good and fewer bad films if more original talent is forthcoming, as it naturally will be, and not hampered beyond endurance, which is less certain. At the same time let the man of taste flourish, the critic here and there who doesn't toe the line, the brave innovator and the brilliant amateur. I know we are living in the Century of the Common Man, but still I have a bee in my bonnet about the desirableness of filming more scripts dealing with the ordinary *uncommon* sort of person: there is a big field for development here (if I may speak for a moment in the accents of Pontifex). Let reasonably well educated people appear on the screen, talking and keeping quiet in the way they do, acting the dramas of their lives with the mannerisms of life—not of the stage or Hollywood. Let us have a few more ladies—like ladies rather than ladylike; and more gentlemen or persons than archetypes of all that is most offensive to readers of left-wing reviews, so many of whom *are*, ladies and gentlemen.



# ROUND TABLE ON BRITISH FILMS

The Editor of SIGHT AND SOUND convened a Round Table debate on British films last month, in the hope that a meeting of those actively concerned with film-making at the present time might yield stimulating discussion, and that an account of it would be interesting to readers. The topic was, simply, economic and creative problems in the British cinema.

Those taking part in the debate were:

Henry Cornelius, producer, writer and director. Produced *Hue and Cry*, *It Always Rains on Sunday*; directed *Passport to Pimlico*.

Thorold Dickinson, director of *Gaslight*, *Next of Kin*, *Men of Two Worlds*, *Queen of Spades*.

Anthony Havelock-Allan, producer. Formerly with Cineguild (*Brief Encounter*, *Great Expectations*): has now formed his own company, Constellation, and produced *The Small Voice*, *The Interrupted Journey*.

Rosamund John, actress. Played in *First of the Few*, *Tawny Pipit*, *The Way to the Stars*, *Green for Danger*, *Fame is the Spur*, *No Place for Jennifer*.

Frank Launder, producer, writer and director. In collaboration with Sydney Gilliat (with whom he formed Individual Pictures), scripted *The Lady Vanishes*; wrote and directed *Millions Like Us*; wrote and produced *The Rake's Progress*, *Green for Danger*; directed *I See a Dark Stranger*, *Blue Lagoon*, *Happiest Days of Your Life*.

Rachael Low, British film historian. Author of *The History of the British Film*, of which two volumes so far have been published.

James George Minter, distributor, producer, and governing director of Renown Film Productions. Productions include *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, *The Glass Mountain*, *Her Favourite Husband*.

Guy Morgan, screenwriter. Film critic for *Daily Express*, 1935-40. Screen credits include *The Captive Heart*, *Anna Karenina*, *Night Beat*. Hon. Sec. of the Screenwriters' Association.

Richard Winnington was unfortunately unable to attend owing to illness.

The chairman was Basil Wright, producer and director, whose films include *Night Mail*, *Windmill in Barbados*, *Song of Ceylon*.

*The photographs are by Duncan Melvin*

*Basil Wright:* Perhaps I may start by saying that there are really two main points under discussion this afternoon.

Firstly, the economic set-up of the industry as it affects the film-maker. Secondly, the content and quality of the films we are making in this country.

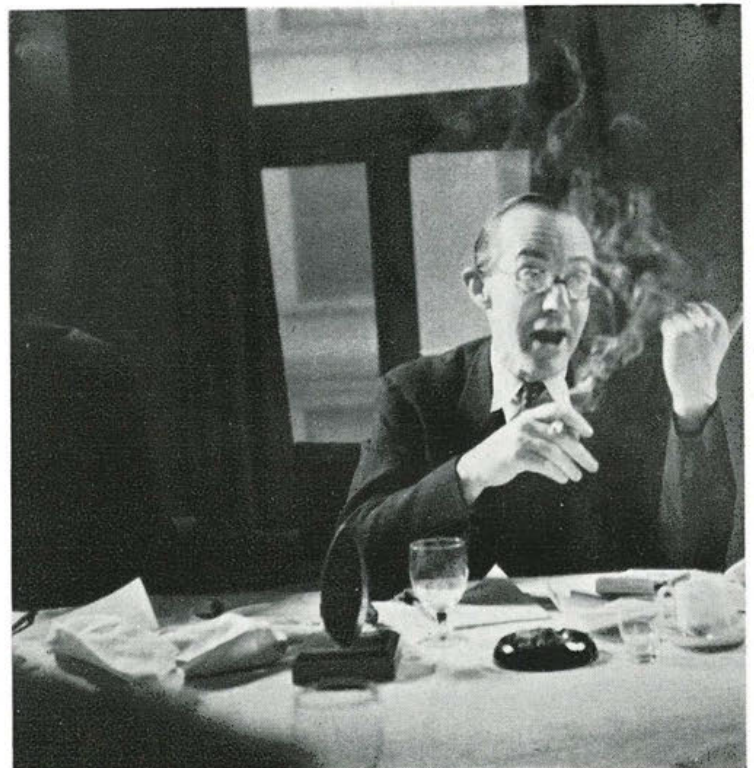
My suggestion is that we make this an informal discussion with a certain measure of control from the Chair—I've been provided here, you see, with a gavel. I think the best way would be to go around the table and let each person have his or her particular say on the subject and then to have a general discussion.

*Frank Launder:* I was rather hoping that Richard Winnington would be here to-day, because I really wanted to talk on the subject of film critics. However, Guy Morgan is here.

*Basil Wright:* Yes, of course, you were writing film criticism at one time, weren't you?

*Guy Morgan:* Criticism has changed these days.

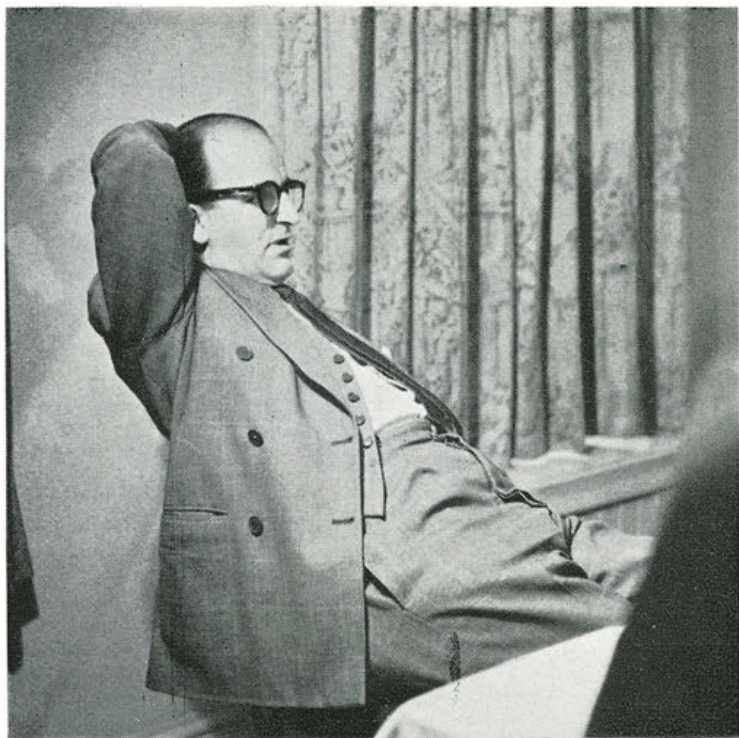
*Frank Launder:* I will say my piece about film critics, anyway. Generally speaking, film critics seldom restrict their criticism of a subject to its own category. If a film is a psychological drama, for instance, then it should be criticised on that plane. To-day, there's a tendency to discuss, say, a film of a novelette and compare it with, say, a film like *Paisa*, making a broad generalisation. If I were a film critic, I would ask myself—is it a good novelette, or is it a bad one? And having made up my mind on this score, fashion my criticism accordingly. I may dislike novelettes intensely, but if it were a good film novelette I think I should say so unequivocally. After all, a director or producer sets out to make a comedy, a romance, a drama, or it may be a realistic picture—and it should not be so difficult for a film critic to define the intention.



*"My suggestion is that we make this an informal discussion . . ."*  
*Basil Wright.*

Dramatic criticism, probably because of the age of the theatre, has found its true perspective. Lonsdale is never confused with Ibsen. This is a feature of dramatic criticism that a number of film critics have yet to learn.





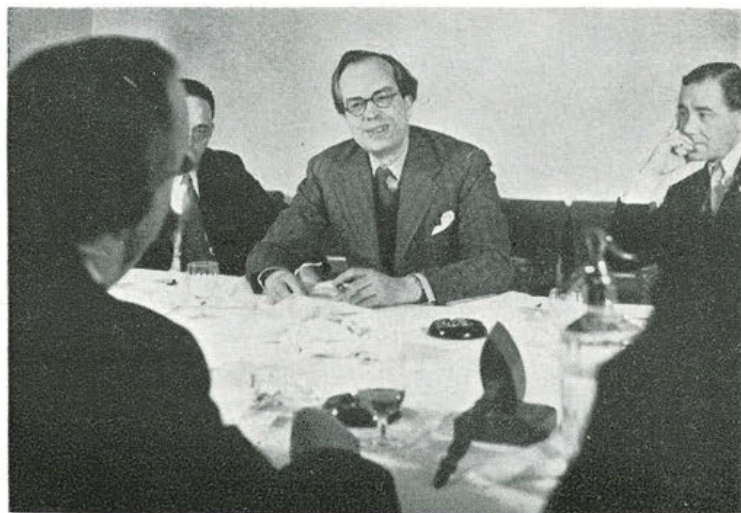
*"I may dislike novelettes intensely. . . ." Frank Launder.*

*Rachael Low:* Linking up with all that to a certain extent, the film industry suffers in general from the fact that it has always regarded a film in an indiscriminating kind of way. There is not enough specialisation of the type of audience a film may be aiming at. I think that because film production is, and always will be, very expensive, and there is such a highly speculative element in it, you are going to be hampered by finance and also hampered artistically while it is organised as it is to-day. I think much more specialisation of audience is needed, even at the cost of having to make cinema-going more expensive. The cinema suffers from the fact that it started off very cheaply, and, while costs have gone up nowadays, the audience still expects it to be a penny show.

*Henry Cornelius:* It seems to me an important point, as far as the critics are concerned, to differentiate between

their two main functions. One is that the critic should do for the cinema what Haskell, for instance, does for ballet—but, apart from three or four critics, you will find the rest are merely box office tipsters. The other function is—advising the public as to what is a good or bad film. I think that very often the good critic's weakness is not to criticise a picture for how much or how little it failed, regarding what the makers set out to do, but to stipulate what they think the makers should have set out to do.

A thing which particularly interested me here was the implication that we were deviating from realism. To me, it seems that the post-war mood in this country is merely symptomatic of the general apathy and staleness. Compared to Italy, for instance, I do not think the shock of the war has been nearly as acute here, and so the response is not as acute either. In Germany there is no response, because the shock was too great. The Italians, in the few pictures which we have singled out, have achieved the kind of humanist approach that is generally representative of their post-war thinking. I think we are faced by a general intellectual muddle of people trying to sort themselves out, and while in France you have someone like Sartre there is, as yet, no sign of anyone here being particularly dynamic in expressing the apathy, the muddle or the confusion. So there is not a great deal of "message" content in the good films. The cinema, though, has achieved a great deal in expressing realism, particularly in comparison with the theatre. If you consider the lack of new ideas on the West End stage—apart from American imports—the cinema has done quite well by comparison.



*"I must say it is a very great luxury to make intellectual films!"  
Thorold Dickinson.*

*Thorold Dickinson:* Well, I must say it is a very great luxury to make intellectual films! The high spots of the history of the cinema have been at times of great emotional stress in the history of the country concerned. Griffith in *Birth of a Nation* first of all appealed to the more discriminating, and finally created a tremendous interest in his film. The Russians have never made such good films as those made directly after the Revolution. When we began to hold our heads up was when we were having a very great emotional stress. The Italians have now produced a new kind of film technique, which is called neo-realism, a study of what people passionately felt at a particular moment—and a lot of it, by the way, has not come off. We have only seen the good ones.



*"The post-war mood in this country is merely symptomatic of the general apathy and staleness", Henry Cornelius (centre).*



The great test of a national film industry is when it is making films in time of peace, when stabilisation has reached us. Sociologically, if we were allowed to make intellectual films about the current Election, then where would we find the response from the onlooker? That is one thing for which we don't praise the Germans enough. During the '20s they produced some very great films—and in the '20s they had ceased to be suffering the immediate emotional effects of war, and had not reached the stress caused by Nazism.

*Frank Launder:* I should have thought they were still suffering from the effects of the war—the effects were pretty bad.

*Thorold Dickinson:* Where I really think that British films are in the doldrums, is that we are not facing up to our audience response. We have one audience which goes to films periodically—that is the great industrial audience—and we have the other audience which shops for its films, and at the moment the only thing they are getting, apart from one or two British ones, are mostly continental films, very few American. The people who make the periodical films have to discipline themselves to make something so simplified that a wide audience can take it, irrespective of what they took the week before. You can't expect them to take *Old Mother Riley* one week and *Henry V* the next. The sort of film which we're allowed to make must get its money back in the home market, and we must organise the audience for it.



"I don't see how one can fail to recognise the box-office control of picture-making". George Minter.

*George Minter:* Thorold has certainly led up to something which is very true, I feel, in regard to audiences and audience reaction. Audiences are not vocal in support of pictures, or against them, but I don't think this is really true of their situation. It is just that they have no immediate way in which they can be vocal. For example, this morning we read about Edith Summerskill and Snoek. If this had not come up during the Election, we should probably

never have heard about it. I think films are a commercial art, and the difficulty is in balancing that art. The only real way that people have got to show their approval of pictures is by going to see them. We should create an audience, and it is very difficult to do this when you realise that, with the present quota, the takings from releases over a whole year is between six and seven million pounds. We have to feed an audience that will produce that kind of money. You may have a special fund or organisation that makes pictures artistically, but I don't see how one can fail to recognise the box office control of picture making. It stultifies people's feelings, ambitions and so on, but Hollywood is basically commercial. Every now and again you get an artistic picture, a picture like *Citizen Kane*, which is definitely art, but Orson Welles is considered a "bum" for the rest of his life because he made a picture like that. That is my view.

*Anthony Havelock-Allan:* I believe that the critics should take into account the resources that went to the making of the picture which they are being asked to criticise. It seems to me that it is not entirely fair to judge, let us say, Orson Welles' production of *Macbeth*, which was completed in 26 days in a studio that was not first class, with *Hamlet*—which took well over 100 days and had all the resources of an industry behind it. In other words, I think in film criticism the aesthetic standard should not vary, but the variation in quality from a production point of view, in relation to the money and resources available, should be taken into account.



"Just beneath the surface, a tremendous emotional pressure". Anthony Havelock-Allan. Also Guy Morgan, Rosamund John.

I thought, when I came here to-day, that I should have little to say—but having listened to the previous speakers, I find that there is a great deal I should like to say. I agree with Thorold Dickinson that countries seem to produce their best films when there is some strong emotional impetus. In the simplest form, American films seem to be at their best when they are most conscious of the bounding vitality of the American people and the richness of the



American potential. The rebirth of the British film industry started in the war with mainly war subjects, and to-day it is noteworthy that the three most successful pictures of the year—*The Third Man*, *The Blue Lamp* and *Morning Departure*—are all films that spring directly out of some urgent aspect of contemporary life. But these are isolated examples, and I have the feeling that picture makers generally are floundering for want of some emotional mainspring.

There is, of course, to-day just beneath the surface a tremendous emotional pressure. The Americans had the opportunity of cashing in on this at the end of the war—and missed it. That opportunity is now open to us, but it is not easy to take advantage of it.

The situation for the Independent is that if he is to make films wholly in this country, he is tremendously limited in subject matter by the economic factors. He knows—or very soon finds out—that there is a top cost figure beyond which, as an Independent Producer, he is taking an enormous risk. This figure is in fact so low that only if he is confident that he has a very exceptional subject can he really honestly go into production here. Just a good picture or a medium picture is not good enough at present-day costs. Where, therefore, is he to go? In my view the economic pressure pushes him in the direction in which there is the richest field of potential material, and where the emotional impetus is strongest.

I think that the best opportunity for the Independent is in subjects showing English people in foreign countries in relation to other peoples: indeed, in relation to those other people in the world with whom he must—and they in turn with him—come to a closer relationship if the world is to survive. I was not consciously aware of this pressure until this luncheon.

In the last few months I have acquired three subjects; one of them is concerned with a group of English people caught up in a common danger with Moslems, Hindus and a number of other nationalities during the bloodshed in Kashmir that followed the partition of India. Another of the subjects concerns the struggle for self-government of the coloured peoples in the West Indies. This again is in relation to British administration which is nearly always well-intentioned but is carried out sometimes by good and sometimes by bad administrators—and so on. What I am trying to say, and what I feel very strongly in general, is that we British, because of our long tradition of on the whole benevolent and well-meaning colonisation (with the case of the recent great gesture towards India to our credit) are, more than any other people in the world, fitted to make films that would tend to promote, through entertainment, a greater understanding of the people of other countries, other races, and other coloured peoples with whom we must eventually learn to live as brothers.

*Guy Morgan:* I have two subjects to talk about, because I have to answer for the absent critic, and I would like also to say something about the economics of screenwriting. I was a critic for five years—but I always insisted on being called a reporter. I think that one of the difficulties to-day is the intellectual approach that critics make in popular newspapers when their function should be intelligent reporting. On behalf of critics, I don't believe that they should be responsible as accountants to estimate how much the resources of a film company were, or need even to have technical knowledge. You don't have to lay eggs to know when they're rotten. I think a critic's standard is



"By the age of fifteen one's emotions have set. . . ." *Guy Morgan.*

the emotional impact a picture makes on him, whether it's *Hamlet* or *Old Mother Riley*.

I am probably in a minority here. For I think that the chief function of the cinema is to disturb the emotions without insulting the intelligence. Audiences are more emotional and less intellectual in ratio to their size. Cinema audiences are the greatest in the country to-day, and they are predominantly emotional. I agree with the sneer that films appeal to the mentality of a child of 15. I think that by the age of 15 one's emotions have set, and that one has probably experienced the highest and lowest extremes of every emotion that one may subsequently experience. A critic is justified in taking the reaction of his own emotions, or of those around him, during a film, as his criterion. Our



*Denis Forman (director of the British Film Institute) and the chairman, Basil Wright.*



emotions react precisely and dependably—only the attempt to rationalise them produces false and misleading conclusions. I think that if a film can succeed in moving you emotionally, it has fulfilled its purpose: if it has emotional truth, it will make a personal impact. That is the standard by which a film should be criticised.

I would now like to add a few words about the economics of screenwriting. A few years ago I and a lot of other people in the Screenwriters' Association, thought that screenwriting had become a regular profession, and that writers were going to take their place beside other technicians in the extremely co-operative process of film production. But the tendency of the last 18 months has been to thrust the screenwriter further and further away from film production into the hinterland of film promotion. Now that scripts are demanded in advance by distributors and the Films Bank, the screenwriter has to write the script long before the planning of the production, without knowing who will be in it or how much money is to be expended on it. The divorce of screenwriting from film production is due to the fact that there are very few screenwriters now working full-time at any studio; it is accentuated by the length of time it now takes for a script to reach the screen. Two film scripts used to be enough for a screenwriter in one year and he worked through with them on the floor. Last year I had to write five scripts without ever seeing the inside of a studio. Only one, finished last May, is now being made; nine months elapsed before it went on the floor. The usual interval between script and screen seems to be about a year. We all hope for happy marriages, and I for one would prefer to be decently fertilised in close contact with a director or producer, than to be artificially inseminated at long range by a distributor or a films bank.

*Rosamund John:* I'm at a very great disadvantage, as many things I thought of saying have already been said. The Chairman remarked on the economic set-up, and this question of economic set-up is fundamental to all film-making. Film making needs more money and, therefore, more courage on the part of the investor than any other form of art. The majority of people on whom we may have relied to put up the money to make films, are now very chary, and these days, because costs of film making have risen, we have to rely on fifteen people where it used to be one. These people have got to be all the more satisfied of the soundness of their investment because they are so chary. The film producer has, therefore, to satisfy many people before he puts his film into action. But if producers simply try to follow lines that have proved lucrative in the past, if they go on playing safe, there is less and less incentive, and this is the death knell to any art—playing safe means playing yourself out. Because *The Jolson Story* was a success you can make *Jolson Sings Again* and get away with it, but you cannot go on following formulas for films, because one was a success. According to the economic theory of the law of diminishing returns, you will get less and less back.

An experimental film can come off. *Bicycle Thieves* is one of these films, although technically I understand it is somewhat lacking; I feel that the reason *Bicycle Thieves* has scored such a success is because it reaches the hearts of people who go to see it. It will, I hope, encourage other people to experiment along these lines. Somebody mentioned the recent Election; there are two fundamental instincts in film makers—one is to play safe, which



"Playing safe means playing yourself out". Rosamund John.

represents about 45 per cent. of the electors in this country, and the other is to experiment. This is the instinct which made people vote for Socialism. Fundamentally, there are always these two trends. Play safe and do what you did before—or experiment.

You will find that the majority of people in this country have come to enjoy Hollywood films because they are easy to look at. In most Hollywood films, the heroine must look beautiful, be dressed glamorously and groomed to perfection—and this is an enormous attraction. On the other hand, you have the Anna Magnani type, the woman who "registers" because she is real. The success of this type in semi-documentary films made in war-time Britain, has encouraged the making of more realistic films, even in Hollywood. People seem much nearer to what they are in real life. Hollywood, as I said before, turns out films in which the heroine is beautifully groomed in every scene. Whereas I personally believe that if you can put across reality to the general public it would be the salvation of films—the reality that belongs to rich or poor, haves and have-nots, the same fears, the same hopes, and, fundamentally, if you can put across these things by a film, you have a tremendous potential influence. Films are a greater medium of advertisement in this way than any other, even greater than radio. The British film industry should take the opportunity now of taking courageous chances. For instance in Indonesia recently, when the Republic was established, the decision was taken to teach English, instead of Dutch, as a second language. In twelve or fifteen years they will go and see films in which the English language is spoken—and it is up to us to meet this challenge, preserve a Film Production Industry in this country so that they may have the chance of learning about the British way of life, and not merely the American.

*Basil Wright:* I meant at this stage to do a brief summary of what has been said so far—but so many striking points have been raised, even practical points, on which action



could be taken that I think it would be better to continue the discussion.

*Frank Launder:* I am really on Rosamund John's side. At the same time, I don't see why a director or a writer should not say, "Now I'm rather bored with this or that type of film, and I would like to make a film in a different field". The thing is, not to make the ordinary film. To me it is all wrong to set about making a film because Mr. So-and-so wants it that way, and I believe that a director should go about making his film quite independently. If he feels he suddenly wants to make a melodrama, he should do so. In support of Miss John, I would say we are really still in the infancy stage of film-making. After all, hardly any films have been made about New Zealand, Australia, South Africa. The world is wide open to film producers, and yet we continue to restrict ourselves to our own little corner of it. For all that, I don't see that one only wants to make films which are earthy.

*Rosamund John:* I am very sorry that I expressed myself so badly. I think that if any director sets out to make a film, a film he wants to make with all his heart and soul—that is the only way he can make a really good film. By all means make your melodrama if you really want to make it—it's the only way you can make it successfully. I didn't mean to suggest that a director shouldn't make any kind of subject he wants to.

*Anthony Havelock-Allan:* It is very difficult when listening to discussions like this to separate out these obviously right aspirations. Miss John raised a very interesting point about *Bicycle Thieves*. What I think she may not know is that this film cost 40,000,000 lire, which was then about £17,000, and took six months to make. But I should like to add that not only would it have been impossible to make a film of that content in this country for less than £90,000, but that with an entirely non-professional cast it would be quite impossible to raise even one-eighth of that sum from the normal financial channels.

*Basil Wright:* That takes us right back to the economic set-up.

*Henry Cornelius:* I entirely agree on that point, because we always have this awful dilemma of heavy costs in film making. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't make, say, *Bicycle Thieves*—and one strong reason would be the trade union rules which most of us fought for. I just could not take a camera and go out to a football match and shoot it. We ourselves must somehow examine how we can solve that very problem of reducing costs, or adjusting some of the very regulations we created so that we can experiment without killing ourselves. I entirely agree that we should make realistic pictures. One very important point that comes in here is the standard which everybody acclaimed and which arose from the merging of documentary into fiction—but now we have to progress beyond the documentary thing, and go on to style. This is remarkably lacking in most of our pictures.

*George Minter:* Not in all of them. You will find that Ealing have a star in every picture, but each Ealing picture still looks like an Ealing picture.

*Henry Cornelius:* Yes, but I think we must not confuse the collective brand or stamp of a studio with a director's personal style. The only pictures which spring to my mind regarding what I mean by style are Hamer's *Kind Hearts* and *Coronets* and Thorold's *Queen of Spades*.

*Thorold Dickinson:* Mr. Minter brought in the very interesting question of the star system, I don't know



*Rosamund John:* "By all means make your melodrama if you really want to. . . ." *Guy Morgan.*



*Frank Launder:* "I don't see that one only wants to make films which are earthy". *Rachael Low.*



*Between the acts: Thorold Dickinson, George Minter, Anthony Havelock-Allan.*



whether everybody round the table here realises it, but even de Sica was told he had to have a star in his picture, and that the producers were looking to the American market. De Sica said he would like to have Henry Fonda, but the Americans who were interested in the picture cabled back that Henry Fonda was "box office poison" and suggested Cary Grant. But de Sica said no, and went to the local factory and picked an entirely unknown man—who is now very sorry that he did the film. This de Sica film which cost between ten and twenty thousand pounds, on the lines of Miss John's experiment, fortunately pulled itself off. If that film had had Cary Grant in it, it would have been sold in this country for a lot more.

We must remember, too, that Southern Italy has beautiful weather conditions—the right amount of sun, and so on, most of the year—which is so different from filming in England. In this country, too, we seem to be more or less chained to America because of the language question. Can someone suggest how we can experiment by not having to provide an elaborate framework for stars? We mostly have stars who must have themselves groomed—unluckily there are not many like Miss John, who is willing to be windswept if it's necessary. This seems a problem which cannot be solved. Can we ever make a picture in this country which can be sold on some *réclame* which does not involve star value?

*Rosamund John:* I agree with Thorold Dickinson. But there is one remark he made, about the Italian film costing so little because it had no stars—but it is not only the stars who send up the price of films. I am speaking a little outside my experience, but I believe that what costs such a lot in this country is that the overheads which are clamped on to your picture are far more expensive than the stars' salaries. I would like to congratulate Thorold Dickinson on *Queen of Spades*—with Dame Edith Evans, who is not a film star but an actress. I prefer not to be considered as a film star—I would much rather be counted as an actress. We must remember that Anna Magnani now costs nearly £30,000 a picture, which all boils down to the fact that when you come to sell yourself—what price do you put upon yourself? If you are cheap, you cannot be a good actor according to the present values of the distributors.

*Anthony Havelock-Allan:* There is also this question of how we have to some extent dug our own graves in creating good conditions—and the strange thing is that what is happening in Italy is the same thing that happened to the French. They started off, too, by making cheap pictures, and produced some wonderful films, only to find year by year that costs, technicians' salaries, materials, etc., were soaring, and hours of effective work diminishing. Broadly speaking, a national industry must be certain of breaking even in the home market. France has reached a point where that is impossible; we have reached the same point, and the Italians will do so before long. To revert to the star question—and as an indication of this—Anna Magnani's salary is now 60,000,000 lire, and Fabrizi's salary is 40,000,000 lire. The increase in cost in this country bears less hardly in respect of stars' salaries than it does in relation to other costs, and shortened hours of working.

*George Minter:* Talking about pictures without stars—there are two good pictures coming up, *Seven Days to Noon* and *The Intruder*\*, which definitely haven't any "stars". It will be very interesting to see what happens to these films

\* *Seven Days to Noon*, directed by the Boulting Brothers; *The Intruder* (now retitled *Guilt Be My Shadow*), directed by Roy Kellino.

at the box office and, more important still, what the exhibitors do to the films.

*Guy Morgan:* What actually worries me at the moment is the price put upon stars' names by distributors who are a fairly small group of men, who owe their position to middlemen. I've found that there's almost an £ s. d. value placed on every star's name. It doesn't matter what the story happens to be, or how suitable the actor is for the part; it's a question of how much or how little an actor has taken at the box office in past films. It is an argument from what has been done in the past, not what can be done in the future, and of course it tends to rule out the good new actor.

*George Minter:* It has now come to the distributors in relation to scripts. Guy was criticising the marriage, as he said earlier, of producers with scripts, but he has now contradicted himself—he now says it is the distributors' fault. You know how far the distributor can dictate to the producer—if Trevor Howard's not available he can say it must be Richard Attenborough . . . Well, then, if the film is to be made at all, the script has got to be changed. But how often I've run up against the stupidity and snobism of scriptwriters who will not write their scripts any differently, as if it doesn't matter who is going to play in the film. Scriptwriters cannot expect people to put down a red carpet and say, "You're wonderful", because anyone can write. Lots of people write—there are masses of scriptwriters. I am very heated about this!



*Frank Launder:* "History repeats itself, unfortunately, in this industry". *Gavin Lambert, Rachael Low, Henry Cornelius.*

*Frank Launder:* The fundamental thing that we are missing at the moment is that if you want a renaissance of the British film industry, you must have imaginative producers who can understand these problems and master them. History repeats itself, unfortunately, consistently in this industry. I can see exactly the same things happening to-day that I saw happening in the crisis of 1937—all the major companies are doing the same things as they did then.

The only exciting occurrence in British films in those



years was when Gainsborough came along with Ted Black.† He was a man who had great integrity, and he had been associated with a chain of cinemas in the North. He was a showman and yet he had great feeling for scripts and spent more time on them than anyone I have ever known. His experimental films used to come off as successfully as his others. Nearly all the British stars we have to-day were built up by Gainsborough—Margaret Lockwood, Stewart Granger, Eric Portman, John Mills, Patricia Roc, James Mason, Jean Kent and many others. Until we get back to the system of a planned programme of films, playing the same artists in picture after picture, we will neither make new stars nor turn out consistently a product which can be offered to the public with any hope of commercial success.



"The audience still expects it to be a penny show. . . ." Rachael Low, Henry Cornelius in foreground.

Henry Cornelius: I would like to go back on one point. During the general discussion we have enumerated a number of reasons why such things as the star system, overheads, working regulations, and so on, tend to make life difficult for experiment in films. One important point is this new way of making independent productions. The one fantastic thing that has become clear to me is that if you're starting to make an independent film for about £110,000, you will have to spend approximately £15,000 straightaway for guarantee, insurance, rates, etc., and that means that out of your whole budget a sum of £15,000—

Frank Launder: You're lucky if it's as little as that.

Henry Cornelius: —will be spent, and not a penny of it will appear on the screen. It does seem fantastic compared to any other business. It is only lunatics like us who will go on doing it. There has been a lot of progress made with Government help, but this has not gone far enough. The fact that Danny‡ and I have managed to get our own

† Edward Black. Productions included *Bank Holiday*, *The Lady Vanishes*, *Kipps*, *We Dive at Dawn*, *Millions Like Us*, *Fanny By Gaslight*, *Waterloo Road*.

‡ Monja Danischewsky. Formerly associate producer at Ealing, now associated with Henry Cornelius in his new independent company.

scheme going is the luck we've had in finding a distributor who agrees with our views. But I think distributors and exhibitors rely too much as box office experts on their own reactionary judgments, because in the last two years a lot of things have happened to confound them.

Thorold Dickinson: We should look to the organisation of production and the safeguarding of technicians generally. I think the safeguards and charges involved here are not a burden to experts—they are a burden to people who are not experts. People who know their job can work quite happily, in spite of all sorts of hold-ups, but with in-expertness in production the result is that people are kicking their heels up. There is no compensation at the end of it, for you cannot expect an intelligent person to go into the film industry without safeguards. The other thing is that with this question of overheads and so on, it seems to me that films can be so profitable that business men tend to make a mystery of the whole making of films, and make unnecessary charges simply because it is a mystery—and even I do not know where all these overheads go. If a studio were operated at cost, and if a studio just kept open and kept in good repair, I think that costs would go down considerably. Another thing is that overheads of financing a film—insurance, guarantee of completion, all those things—can never, I suppose, become a national charge. But Frank, I think, has a solution there—the imaginative producer with courage, who would have a wide group around him, and who can run his studio so that he does not want a big profit on his buildings, etc. The trouble is to-day that too many people behind the producer, providing the money, milk everything they can—hire out cameras to themselves, etc., so that in many cases the costs are terrific. That sort of thing should be eradicated.



Thorold Dickinson: "You can't expect them to take *Old Mother Riley* one week and *Henry V* the next". In attendance: George Minter, Anthony Havelock-Allan, Guy Morgan, Rosamund John.

George Minter: I think that what Thorold says is very true.



*Henry Cornelius:* Quite obviously, any given situation or job, if handled by an expert, can be done cheaper than by an amateur. Against that I firmly believe that certain restrictions are applied far too rigidly, and surely some way must be found of making exceptions—when the nature of the picture warrants the violation of rules and regulations, not only to save money but to increase quality. Both of which we have to do to-day.

*Basil Wright:* It's now my job to try and sum up. I think the first thing for me to do is to emphasise that we are not here today as a Committee trying to formulate a scheme to put the British Film Industry back on its feet. We have simply been having an informal discussion in which people concerned in different sections of the film world have said what they think. Between them, the people here have represented a good cross section—producing, directing, screenwriting, distributing, criticism, and film history.

Taking it under the headings with which we began—Content, or Quality, and Economics—there has been a large measure of agreement on certain points. As regards content of films, there has been a strong demand that we as film-makers must face up to the challenge of the times, and, among other things, that we should go outside our parochial preoccupations and make films about other people in other lands as well as about ourselves. It has also been pointed out that the solution does not lie only in realism, but that we must also aim at achieving style.

All this, of course, overlaps considerably on the economic aspect, for, as nearly everyone has pointed out today, the creative problems of the film-maker arise in great part from the financial strait-jacket in which he usually finds himself. Nearly everyone has agreed that we need imaginative producers who are able to work in comparative freedom, and certainly without dictation from distribution or exhibition interests. Other ideas put forward this afternoon have included the cutting down of present high production costs by reducing the ridiculous expense in finding "end money", by getting some sense of proportion about star values, by reducing the vast overheads

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*Beauté du Diable*) leading cinematography towards new forms of expression. Seen retrospectively, *Le Sang d'un Poète* (1931) was the germ from which it grew—indeed, it is acknowledged by Cocteau as partly autobiographical. From members of the unit, I learnt that *Orphée* had long been Cocteau's supreme ambition, and that he covered half its production cost from his private means.

For me, the outstanding quality of *Orphée* is its sincerity. In his other works (with the notable exception of *Les Parents Terribles*, and certain moments of tender simplicity in *La Belle et la Bête*, like Beauty listening to the Beast lapping water) I was uneasily conscious of Cocteau as a leader of artistic fashion. Here, I was constantly aware that the experiences communicated were genuine and deeply personal. Since they belong to a kind of "no man's land between life and death," it would be as presumptuous to assume that they are known to others as that they are unknown. Nor can I be certain that the emotions the film stirred in me are identical with the author's. All I do know is that the film abounds in moments pregnant with meanings and feelings that matter to me.

In transposing the Orphic myth to modern times, Cocteau has not used any known version of it in its entirety. Exploring the connection between knowledge and



*Cheerfulness breaks in: Rachael Low, Thorold Dickinson, George Minter, Anthony Havelock-Allan, Guy Morgan, Rosamund John.*

of the studios and trying to run them as near as possible to a cost basis, and by arriving at a measure of give and take as regards present Trades Union regulations.

I am not trying to pretend that those present today have revealed 100 per cent. unanimity on all these points, or, for that matter on other questions we have discussed, such as the role of the film critic and the screenwriter. But I hope and think that I have fairly summarised the general trend of our discussion. It only remains for me to thank you all for the trouble you have taken and for the enthusiasm you have shown.

the things beyond, he has, rather, adapted Orphic motives and symbols to purposes entirely his own. His Orpheus (Jean Marais) is a successful poet in St. Germain des Près, admired and envied by his colleagues; hated, as of old, by the Bacchantes. In his passionate quest for truth, he becomes enamoured of the enigmatic figure of Death (Maria Casarés), in whose strictly regulated world individualism cannot exist. An Angel (François Perier), in the guise of Death's chauffeur, guards and guides his restless transitions from one world to the other, but is powerless to save him. In the end, contrary to mythology, it is Death, in love with the poet, who sacrifices herself and restores him with his wife Eurydice (Marie Déa) to the land of the living.

Orpheus' yearning to fathom the mysteries of destiny; his passage, with the aid of clinical rubber gloves as his talisman, through mirrors of infinity into the bewitched spheres where crystal clear visions are momentarily grasped, then lost in nothingness; the words, like radio code messages, which sound as if they hold the answers, but make no sense at all; the maze of familiar things and strange things—all this and myriad other images and echoes are contained in the only film poem I have seen which gives an inkling of what a poet's ecstasies and agonies may be.



# Films of the Month

## CHANCE OF A LIFETIME

Paul Rotha



"Chance of a Lifetime". Kenneth More (right).

BRITISH COMMERCIAL CINEMA lacks practical evidence of new ideas and experiment so painfully that one can overlook many weaknesses in this Bernard Miles film, which has already aroused controversy. It is not, firstly, the independent documentary-style picture for which many of us have been waiting, but it does at least achieve with some success a breakaway from the studio routine jobs. As the producer himself admits, it cost too much in view of current market yields but it cost considerably less than such eyesores as *Christopher Columbus* or the *Lord Byron* farce. As an experiment *Chance of a Lifetime* is fully justified; everyone connected with it should have gained invaluable experience. Of how many British pictures can that be said?

Bernard Miles relates that Filippo del Giudice gave him the chance to prepare the project in the summer of 1948. Miles thought up an idea, called in Walter Greenwood, and together they worked out a story based on the theme of workers' control in a factory. Dickenson (Basil Radford) is a genial, well-disposed boss of a smallish firm of agricultural machinery makers. A trifling incident sets off a strike. Dickenson, always a man to face the music in person, addresses a mass meeting of his workers in the yard. Making little headway, he is provoked into challenging them to run the factory themselves. To his surprise, the challenge is accepted. A man of his word, he takes an enforced holiday at home. The workers' repre-



"Chance of a Lifetime". The Xenobian delegation.





"Chance of a Lifetime". The rebellious worker (Geoffrey Keen).



"Chance of a Lifetime". Factory workers: Bernard Miles, Niall MacGinnis.

sentatives, Stevens (Bernard Miles) and Morris (Julien Mitchell) take over and, as might be expected, run into immediate difficulties; some of their comrades' making and others from the firm's bank and the suppliers of raw materials. Finally Dickenson, unable to stay away from the pavilion, comes back and helps them win their battles. A happy compromise is reached and capital and labour settle down together.

The film has little political significance and is unlikely to have been financed from Moscow, or from Whitehall, for that matter. Miles and Greenwood have taken what to them is a lively, topical and widely interesting subject, and made it with a sense of humour. Despite the opinion of the circuit booking-managers, I found it very entertaining. Technically it is a great deal better than many films from our studios. Bernard Miles showed good sense in picking Alan Osbiston for a collaborator. Osbiston has learnt film-making in the cutting-room. It tells in the excellent camera set-ups and smooth editing of the film. Growing up in documentary, cutting new stuff and old, Osbiston would have been given a chance at direction in features long ago if our producers were men of judgment. He is one of several young directors who, if the Film Finance Corporation and the President of the Board of Trade really tackled the British film crisis, would be working overtime.

The experiment of making the whole film ex-studio is successful. A disused woollen mill in the Cotswolds was taken over, partly converted, and most of the film shot

there. Good small-part actors were picked by Miles to support Basil Radford, Julien Mitchell, Josephine Wilson and himself. Their playing is first class. True they are not dolled up, made up and preened up like the actors in so many films; I liked them the better for it. Photography by Eric Cross is on a high level. The whole production proves, if proof were needed, that this kind of ex-studio shooting can be done well in Britain. *Whisky Galore* proved that too, and so have countless documentaries going back to Watt's *Bill Blewitt*.

*Chance of a Lifetime* is a brave try at something new and it deserves a square distribution deal. As is now common knowledge, the three major circuits refused to book it. So the producers submitted it to the Cripps Selection Committee which agreed unanimously that it should be given a circuit release. Thus compelled legally to take it, the circuits drew lots and it was Mr. Rank's Odeon circuit's unlucky day. This is irony indeed, because it was partly dissatisfaction at the raw deal handed out by Gaumont-British Distributors to his first independent feature film, *Turn of the Tide*, in 1936 that induced J. Arthur Rank to enter the distribution and exhibition field. It will be of great interest to observe how Odeon play *Chance of a Lifetime* and into which of its theatres the film is booked. British Lion's chief, Sir Arthur Jarratt, who is distributing the film, is said to have great faith in it. Del Giudice, who first promoted it, resigned from the Rank Organisation over disagreement on distribution among other matters. It is now up to the press and the public.



# TWELVE O'CLOCK HIGH and BATTLEGROUND

Frank Hauser



"*Twelve o'clock High*". Collapse after 'maximum effort': Gregory Peck (right) as Savage.

WHEN A FILM is concerned with the realities of war, with courage as its theme and the re-creation of shattered morale as its story, fairly exacting standards are necessary in judging its success. By these standards, and by no others, *Twelve O'Clock High* is a failure; while *Battleground*, which also notices that courage and morale existed in war-time, simply cannot be measured by them at all. It is not a comparative failure; it is just another and inferior sort of film.

The deficiency in *Twelve O'Clock High* is a lack of depth in the principal character. The action is straightforward. We see first a flight of bombers returning to an airfield after a mission; the first two land successfully, the third crash-lands. Out of it reels a young pilot, who is promptly sick on the wing. Two others of the crew hand out the

co-pilot, his leg broken, raving, the top of his head shot open, not dead but berserk. Somebody mentions a blown-off leg which is still inside. The bald, ineffective adjutant goes in and fetches it. The Group Commander arrives, and feels as bitter as his men about the merciless pressure of daylight bombing which is killing them off. Lord Haw-Haw broadcasts, and everyone listens . . .

Then the Group Commander is relieved of his command that same night, and his place is taken by Brigadier-General Savage, a personal friend. Savage makes his position perfectly clear: in his opinion, the ex-C.O. had become "over-identified" with his men. He was more interested in keeping his "boys" alive than in winning the war. The General believes that they are not "boys" at all,



but men: that they must be taught not to depend on a leader, or on their personal loyalties, but to stand up on their own, owing no devotion save to the Bomber Group.

Anyone who suffered under that kind of new broom during the war will know what happens next. The demoting of officers and N.C.O's, the harrying, the iciness: from below it is intolerable, and from the man's own level it is an exacting, almost impossible course, pursued with unswerving energy and honesty. (One of the film's most remarkable features is the emergence of Gregory Peck at last into the rank of authoritative actors: no one could have better conveyed the mental discipline and humanity of Savage.)

The rest of the tale is simple. Morale improves, and after a drawn-out campaign of obstruction the air-crews realise that their new Commander is worth supporting. They go on mission after mission with decreasing losses. Germany is bombed for the first time (and there is a wonderfully composed air-battle, the only one in the film, made up mostly from Allied and German newsreels). In spite of the opposition of almost all his friends and well-wishers, Savage's policy is justified.

But this film, made with fidelity and exactness, cannot stop there. The writers, who adapted their own novel for the screen, are not dealing with heroes and supermen; out of their story comes the inevitable question—what can we learn from this? They do not shelve the answer by killing their protagonist. Instead, a logical and ironic twist puts Savage in the same position as the friend whose command he took over. The affected unconcern when friends are shot down, the ruthless pursuit of an ideal standard of conduct, exact their price; and Savage breaks up under the prolonged strain.

Throughout, the film is technically convincing and emotionally accurate. Henry King has directed it with force and concentration, and though there is a good deal of dialogue the film never seems dominated by it. Music is mercifully quite absent (except for the brief prologue and epilogue), the camerawork is as expert as one has come to demand; and the acting is uniformly good—Gary Merrill as the outgoing Colonel and Dean Jagger as the calm, middle-aged lawyer, are particularly accomplished.

But the film stands or falls by its picture of Savage. And though, in Gregory Peck's performance, he is solid and



*"Twelve o'clock High". The General (Millard Mitchell), the "over-identified" colonel (Gary Merrill), Gregory Peck.*

actual enough, we are not told anything really vital about him. Did he know what the job entailed—the almost certain collapse of his mind? Was he a brave man with an unusual degree of intelligence, or a brave, obstinate soldier who happened for once to be right? What are his standards of behaviour outside the war framework? These things are not made known to us, and consequently a second viewing of this film reveals no more than the first. We see *how* he and the others behave, but not *why*. There is nothing for the mind to linger on but the facts of bravery and endurance; and the facts, though impressive enough in all conscience, can never fire the imagination as the motives and experience of bravery could do.

Such considerations have no place in trying to remember the other recent American war picture, M.G.M's "finest film", *Battleground*. This account of the Battle of the Bulge confines itself to the doings of a single platoon, and manages to convey something of the isolation and confusion which that kind of battle involved. But the writing is riddled with clichés, the direction (William Wellman) unflaggingly efficient and superficial, and the stars (Van Johnson, John Hodiak, Ricardo Montalban, old uncle George Murphy and all) depressingly unconvincing for all their stubble. No issues are solved because none is raised, and one even begins to long for some inspiring background music to make the whole thing less portentous. Courage without awareness is an animal virtue; like this film, it serves a purpose of sorts—but no one is likely to find it exhilarating.



# MUSIC

Antony Hopkins

THIS MONTH I am going to write as a composer, not as a film critic; for there are a few things that need to be said about the present situation in the film industry as far as music is concerned. On the whole, the British composer has done a good job in our films and, thanks very largely to the long-term policy followed over a number of years by Muir Mathieson, he has reaped a generous and satisfactory financial reward. So this is not an article calling for higher pay; on that score I have no complaints. But on the artistic level there are some weaknesses, whose cure could make a major improvement in the quality of our films. The main one, from which all the smaller complaints stem, is this:

THE COMPOSER SHOULD BE CONSULTED ABOUT THE MUSICAL POTENTIALITIES OF A PICTURE BEFORE SHOOTING BEGINS, AND WHILE THE FILM IS IN THE SCRIPT STAGE.

This might be thought too obvious a point to be worth mentioning; but the unfortunate truth is that such a policy is practically unheard of in this country. In my experience, I do not know of a single case where a composer has been called in at such an early stage, except, possibly, in such films as *The Red Shoes* and any other films intimately connected with ballet. Even there, I should hazard a fairly large sum that all the *situations* in the film which demanded music were visualised in detail before the musicians were brought in.

At the moment, the general rule is that the film is shot, cut and even dubbed before a composer sees it. It is as though the director regards music as a glossy cover to be put on after the magazine is printed, not as an integral part of the soundtrack. I do not suggest that the director may not have a very shrewd idea of where he intends to use music as a background; after all, when the wretched composer is brought in to see the finished film, he is told: "We must have music behind this scene, and this and this . . .". The point I am trying to establish is that, were the composer to be called in before shooting started, he might well see musical possibilities in the script that would affect the director's interpretation of a particular scene. Such a supposition is not unreasonable; for the composer has an imagination which both by instinct and by training leads him to find the musical parallels to a visual experience. Obviously the composer would not be expected to interfere with the general treatment of the story; but even the greatest film is, by its very nature, a perfectly assembled sequence of minute details: and one can only assume that

a further fastidiousness of attention to one aspect of the whole would be an additional improvement.

Let me present an imaginary sequence in a comedy—the sort of film which depends for its effects on the accumulation of a series of delicate touches. A postman (character part) is seen walking along the street, opens a gate, walks up the garden path, and knocks on a door. The whole scene is for all practical purposes *mime*: one can imagine the humour which a Lubitsch could draw from even such a simple affair. As things are at the moment, the director realises all along that this scene will have a musical backing. He shoots, cuts and edits the sequence, and some months afterwards the composer is shown the film and told to write music behind it. To his exasperation he discovers that it is impossible to find a common tempo for the postman's actions; his walk up the street varies almost imperceptibly from his walk up the garden path, and the knocks are just out of the natural rhythm of the sequence. With the company's musical director he argues the pros and cons of trying to make the music fit one or the other section, and at the end has to spoil the whole idea by writing a piece which fits neither as closely as he would like.

My ideal way to do such a sequence, and it would save hours of work and a great deal of money, would be to shoot the scene to music—not necessarily to an orchestra, of course—thereby making it much easier for the actor to time every little gesture, and give the sequence a stylisation that would make it sparkle. By preparing certain sections of the score in advance, and shooting to them, one could bypass many of the most time-wasting processes of production. Actors could preserve more easily the emotional continuity of a scene, and by having a static "frame" to move against in a certain natural rhythmic pattern, could probably dispense with much wearisome repetition in rehearsal. (I am not suggesting, of course, that this method is practical for any sequence demanding speech.)

So far I have been critical: let me end with a note of praise. I have no doubt that Mr. Rank has been criticised, among other things, for his extravagance in granting scholarship awards to young composers to study film music down at Denham. This scheme has probably been suspended now; but not before it has paid off—which is I suppose the only criterion by which the film world judges such matters. Several excellent scores were written by these young people for documentary films; and those who are interested should now make a point of seeing *Boys in Brown*—or rather listening to its first-class score by Doreen Carwithen. Miss Carwithen has worked for some time in the Music Department at Denham, and has acquired there a technical assurance and mastery of her craft that is immediately apparent in her first feature film. Some time ago I was impressed by her title music to a little "B" picture called *To the Public Danger*. This talent has now come to fruition, and she has produced a score of which even William Alwyn would not be ashamed.



# SCRIPTING

J. H. Kahan

MUCH DEPENDS on the opening of a film, the first introduction of incident or character; and, basically, the script-writer must determine this. We know several "schools" of introduction, of which the American technique of staccato cuts to start a thriller and plunge us into the middle of the action within a minute or two, and the Russian school of andante development and gradually quickening rhythm, are perhaps the most outstanding. As a typical example of the in-between school, one may quote the excellent introduction of the British film, *Golden Salamander*.

1. Close-up: a man (Trevor Howard) at the wheel of a car, driving in a thunderstorm.
2. Pan shot: on a mountain road.
3. C.U.: Howard trying to wipe the windscreen clear.
4. P.S.: Road in front of him, passing between high rocks.
5. C.U.: Howard in profile, lighting a cigarette, with a watchful eye on the road.
6. Long shot: the car coming round a bend in the road, cliffs leading down to the sea now in background.
7. C.U.: Howard looking out with attention, having noticed something.
8. L.S.: The road is blocked by rocks. Howard stops his car.
9. M.S.: Howard getting out of car.
10. C.S.: He inspects the scene, realises he cannot drive on.
11. C.S.: He takes out a suitcase, and switches off the headlights of his car, obviously abandoning it.
12. Overhead shot. He walks through the bushes and over rocks, sees on the other side an abandoned lorry.
13. C.S.: He comes nearer.
14. C.S. (another angle): He sees some boxes fallen off the lorry and broken open.
15. C.U.: He finds, concealed under straw packing in a box, some guns. He puts one gun into his pocket.
16. L.S.: Another lorry coming up the road.
17. C.S.: Howard hides and watches.
18. Overhead shot. Two men get off the other lorry: rain, thunder and lightning.
19. C.U.: Howard, watching them closely.
20. C.U.: Flash of lightning illuminates the faces of the two men.
21. C.U.: Howard, having seen them, turns away.
22. Overhead shot. He disappears behind rocks. Fade.
23. L.S.: Fade in to a little town, the rain has stopped: Howard is crossing the square, suitcase in hand. . . .

The whole sequence lasts about seven minutes, not a single word (except for a few lines spoken by the two men to each other, drowned by thunder) has been spoken. The

cinema has used its own language in an admirable way to introduce a story and its principal characters.

Another opening is an American one, not the staccato blows of a thriller but again a slow one, leading to a flashback—in this case a flashback used rightly and imaginatively. The film (far superior, by the way, to *Golden Salamander*) is *Twelve O'Clock High*. A prosperous-looking American comes out of a hatter's in St. James's and pauses in front of an antique shop a few yards down the street. In the shop, after the man has entered it, the assistant comes to the window and takes from it a toby jug. The American insists on buying it, though the assistant emphasises it is broken, and the price is only ten shillings. Next we see the American, having bought the jug, in the compartment of a train just stopping at a country station. He gets out, and next we see him riding a bicycle down a lane. At a lonely spot, with cows grazing in a field nearby, he leans the bicycle against a wooden fence and steps over it to look at the fields beyond. He stands on the grass-grown macadam runway of an abandoned airfield. He looks round, and over a hut still hangs a windsock on a stick. As he stands there, the voices of airmen singing come up on the soundtrack, mixed with the crescendo roar of bombers' engines; this makes a very impressive sound-dissolve to the past life of the airfield. (The importance of the jug appears later—it was used as a mascot by the group.)

This is not only a striking dramatic opening but remarkable for its effective use of sound—the sound of aircraft engines is used very cleverly throughout the film. The moments of silent tension when all the ground staff are waiting for the bombers to return, gain strongly in contrast. In one scene, the look-out in the control tower is tense, on the field everything is ready for normal or for emergency landings—ambulances, fire appliances, fire-fighters with their asbestos suits, jeeps to take the crews to Interrogation. . . . The silence becomes almost unbearable with the empty sky above the field, when suddenly out of the tension of waiting some of the ground staff start absent-mindedly to play a ball game, while still on the look-out. Here, visually explained, without dialogue, is a brilliant example of the working of the subconscious mind, trying to play away the tension, the suspense.

In Frank Capra's new film, *Riding High* (not as a whole very successful) there are a few scenes of really good cinema. Most notable of all is the horse-race at the climax. We know beforehand that the jockey riding Bing Crosby's horse does not want the horse to win. The horses shoot out of the starting machine, and Capra cuts sharply to people running with a jerk towards the rails to watch the race. The race is superbly managed, the camera moving sometimes almost with the noses of the leading horses, intercutting to spectators, till Crosby's horse finally wins to the cheers of the crowd. Then, a cut in *sound*—the whole scene becomes silent: the crowd is staring, startled. A visual cut: the winning horse has dropped dead. No dialogue could replace this scene or improve it—or the scene in *Twelve O'Clock High*. It is the playing of sound against silence, of visual climax against the spoken word. Script-writers should learn much from these examples.

No stronger contrast could be found than in Rossellini's *The Miracle*. Rossellini works on the script of all his films, and is finally responsible for their quality. *The Miracle* has no story in the usual sense; it reminds us of the sketches a painter employs before starting on a big canvas. But in





"Riding High". The beginning of the racetrack scene.

Rossellini's case the big film does not emerge—we are left with a mere sketch which seems to be more a testing of the acting ability of Magnani than a film to be judged as a film. But as Magnani does not need such a test, having proved herself before, this would seem to be superfluous. The opening shot lasts nearly ten minutes, and shows Magnani in uninterrupted monologue. As a result of this, a suspicion some of us have been nursing—that we should approach Rossellini's faculties as a professional film-maker rather cautiously—comes out into the open. The director seems to be experimenting with the medium like a gifted amateur. The development of *The Miracle* proves the suspicion justified: the woman's character is not even properly established—we know only that she is a kind of religious maniac and a sexually frustrated peasant of very limited intelligence. The direction is almost wholly crude, a quality noticeable often in Rossellini's previous films. *Open City*, which is perhaps the exception, had a strong story of a traditional kind. What impressed the critics and made some people believe in a new film genius, were two things: outstanding players, Fabrizi and Magnani (good, by the way, under any director) and the atmospherically

rough visual presentation necessitated by lack of resources. The direction of many scenes—especially those at the Gestapo headquarters—was tasteless: remember also the dwelling on the painful difficulties of a pregnant woman, more fully exploited in *The Miracle*. In *Germany Year Zero* we saw a number of German actors known for about twenty years as competent and reliable, behaving and speaking in a completely unconvincing way. In *Paisa*, the loose chain of episodes kept together only by the device of a map of the advancing allied armies through Italy, made a superficially satisfactory pattern. But the sequences had no real unity, and were very unevenly presented. The first episode was quite bafflingly edited, and two others, the shoe-shine boy and the scene in the monastery, though notable for their human values, were scrappily developed and handled. And the persistent tragic-ironic twist at the end of each story robbed the longer final episode of the Po river of its force—for once again Rossellini had no further comment to make, only a re-statement of hopelessness. It seems to me that neither in the writing or the handling of Rossellini's films is there evidence of a director developing his craftsmanship and his accomplishments.





Lilian Gish in "Hearts of the World". The wedding dress.

*The purpose of this series of reviews is to look again at films which have come to be regarded as "classics" in the history of the cinema. Although what matters to us here is their intrinsic value as motion pictures, their importance historically speaking will also be kept in mind. In addition we shall give a summary of some past critical opinion on the film.*

*We hope this series of revaluations will be of use to film societies faced with the problem of preparing programme notes for their audiences as well as of interest to all readers who like old as well as new film.*

## *Hearts of the World, 1918*

*Produced and directed by D. W. Griffith. Original story and scenario by Griffith, though credited under the noms de plume of M. Gaston de Tolignac and Captain Victor Marier. Photography: G. W. Bitzer. Musical score composed and arranged by Carl Elinor and Griffith. Supervisor of military detail: Erich von Stroheim.*

*With Lillian Gish as the Girl, Robert Harron as the Boy, Dorothy Gish as the "Little Disturber". Erich von Stroheim and Noel Coward had small parts in the film.*

*Hearts of the World* requires a great deal of that sympathy to be found in the connoisseur of silent films if it is to meet with a reasonable reception to-day. The full details of its production are given by Seymour Stern in the special Index of Griffith's work which he compiled for SIGHT AND SOUND (1947). Briefly, Griffith, at the height of his

reputation after *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916), came to England in March, 1917, full of the desire to make a film of the War after America's entry into it. *Intolerance* was being acclaimed in London, and Griffith met the British war leaders as a distinguished representative of America. He discussed with Winston Churchill the use



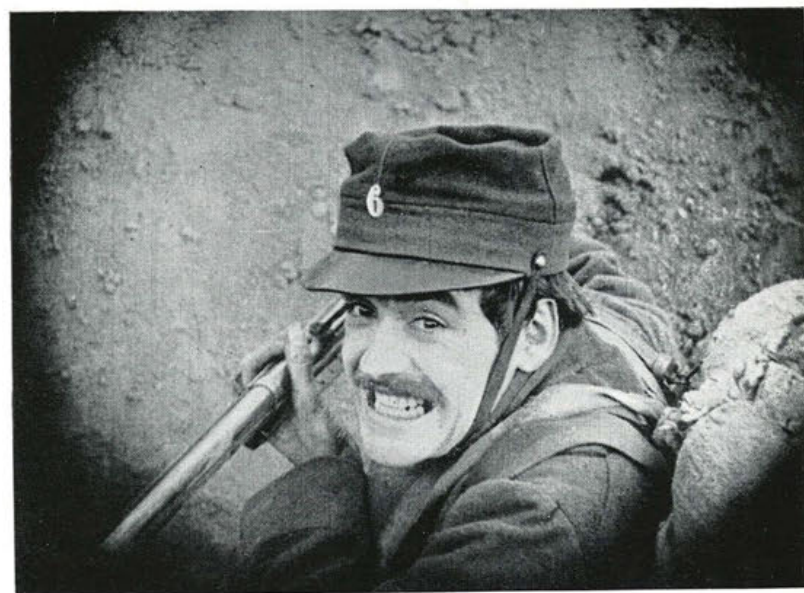
of the screen to bolster morale. He was presented to Royalty. He visited the Western Front under the auspices of the British War Office, accompanied by high-ranking officers. He returned, wrote his screen story, summoned his leading players from America, had the familiar kind of trouble over getting passes for his cameraman, whose name, Gottlieb Wilhelm Bitzer, led to a delay of several weeks. The film, which was the story of two lovers and their families in a French village captured temporarily by the Germans, was made on location in both France and England, and the company returned to America in October, 1917. Griffith and Bitzer had frequently penetrated into the front line, and secured an enormous footage of record material of the war. Seymour Stern goes so far as to claim that "the total documentary footage filmed by Griffith in 1917 on the Western front forms one of his most massive contributions to the screen".

The film itself was released the following April as an independent production by Griffith. It was a phenomenal success. Stern puts in a high claim for it on the grounds of its war scenes rather than for its story, which he admits to be weak. "Indeed, *Hearts of the World* was the first big film of modern war: it was war as only the screen could show it. There were immense battle panoramas, with troop and truck movement, 'squadrons of airplanes' and with panel-shots, showing 'miles of artillery', intercut with full screen detail close-ups of the wounded and the dying; there were country-wide vistas, showing the 'march of legions', or whole armies locked in combat, intercut, as in *The Birth of a Nation*, with intimate glimpses of the lives and tragedies of the civilian population behind the lines; there was an arsenal of pictorial effects ('psycho-visual impacts', to put it in the language of contemporary psychology) achieved through a combination of photography, direction and editing, and counterpointed with, or heightening, the documentary realism, drama and propaganda".

Lewis Jacobs, in "The Rise of the American Film", attacks *Hearts of the World* as "a mediocre effort", entirely unworthy of Griffith. He writes, "In a statement to reporters on his return to America, Griffith revealed his superficial understanding of the war by remarking that his sets for *Intolerance* had been more impressive than anything he saw in war-torn France and Belgium. 'Viewed as drama', he said, 'the war is in some ways disappointing.'" It is a common enough experience to find most actuality scenes of real warfare ineffective on the screen. He may even, writes Stern, have found it necessary to shoot some additional "artificial" war scenes back home in California to supplement the record material he had brought from France. This, however, has never been verified.

*Hearts of the World*, undoubtedly one of the greatest successes of the first World War in the field of film propaganda, has lost a great deal of its value along with its topicality. It is difficult to appreciate the reasons for its success, not only because it belongs so closely to a period which has become more remote than ever since the second World War, but also because of Griffith's own out-dated attitude to humanity and to the causes of modern war.

Griffith was a curious figure, an artist who lived in two distinct worlds. In one world he was a poet seeking an outlet for self-expression which belonged properly to the romantic notions of lesser Victorian literature. His subtitles, which he wrote himself, are full of the faded flowers of nineteenth century poetic idiom, and his sentiments are



Three close-ups from "*Hearts of the World*". Top to bottom: Lilian Gish as the Girl, Ben Alexander as the Littlest Brother, Robert Harron as the Boy.





"Hearts of the World". Above: the village before the war. Dorothy Gish and (right) Noel Coward. Below: after the Germans have passed through.



only too often ridiculously over-simplified. Yet these literary strivings were the product of a man whose true creative impulse belonged to the other world of the twentieth century and to the new art of the film; this art his technical foresight and dynamic inspiration did more to originate than the invention of any other single figure in the history of motion pictures. But *Hearts of the World* belongs too much to Griffith's Victorian sentiment, and too little to the art in which his genius for the film found its full expression. He over-simplifies the problems of war, and he so generalises the characters of its victims that they become mere human types pitifully tossed about by forces beyond their control. In *Hearts of the World* Griffith has been left far behind by an age in which the implications of modern psychology have supplanted the simplifications of Griffith's tender portraits. The Boy "whose soul flamed with genius", the Girl who hops and skips with continuous coy excitement and Dorothy Gish's hoyden who pours scent into her bosom and flaunts her hips as she struts down the village street, have all long since vanished, together with the sentiment of titles like "Forever and forever" (bordered with flowers to emphasise the lovers' kiss) or that which describes the Girl's wedding dress as "stitched with white threads and whiter dreams".

Yet even as Griffith wrote these archaic words, he must have known that this wedding dress would make the finest scene in the film. Turned mad, like Ophelia, with the weight of war's disasters to her family and to her village home, the Girl wanders over the muddy battlefields until she finds what she believes to be the dead body of her lover. She carries her white wedding dress in her arms, and the scene is lifted by the sincerity and visual sensibility of Griffith from melodrama into true poetry. The wedding dress looks like a shroud: she kneels and prays by a wayside crucifix, while the horizon behind her smoulders with the smoky fires of war. When she finds the body of her lover she rests prostrate beside him, her head on his shoulder. "And so they spent their bridal night", says Griffith's reticent title, after a slow fade.

The scenes of war save this film from banality. There is a slow beauty in the long, desolate panoramas of battle, with their explosions and their columns of men marching or fighting. Yet it all seems oddly remote because of the melodrama of the main story. An occasional glimpse of reality comes from the scene of civilian evacuation and the shots of huddled crowds of refugees in a church crypt. But the final situation, in which the Boy and the Girl are trapped by innumerable villainous Germans in an attic to which there is access by two separate outside staircases, belongs to the earliest kind of film serial, last minute rescue and all. In general, *Hearts of the World* is much further below the standard of *Broken Blossoms* and *Way Down East* than they are below that of *Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*.



# THROUGH THEATRE TO CINEMA

S. M. Eisenstein



*A scene from Eisenstein's stage production of Jack London's "The Mexican", one of the first experiments in the Soviet post-revolutionary theatre.*

*Eisenstein's last book, "Film Form", a collection of his miscellaneous writings over the last fifteen years, was published in America nearly two years ago. We are pleased to announce that Dennis Dobson Ltd. have acquired the rights for this country, and will publish the book at a later date. Meanwhile, SIGHT AND SOUND will serialise parts of it each month. "Through Theatre to Cinema" is taken from the first essay in the book, which contains some interesting autobiographical material, concerned with Eisenstein's early career as a stage producer.*

IT IS INTERESTING to retrace the different paths of to-day's cinema workers to their creative beginnings, which together compose the multi-coloured background of the Soviet cinema. In the early 1920's we all came to the Soviet cinema as something not yet existent. We came upon no ready-built city; there were no squares, no streets laid out; not even little crooked lanes and blind alleys, such as we may find in the cinemetropolis of our day. We came like bedouins or gold-seekers to a place with unimaginably great possibilities, only a small section of which has even now been developed.

We pitched our tents and dragged into camp our experiences in varied fields. Private activities, accidental past professions, unguessed crafts, unsuspected eruditions—all were pooled and went into the building of something that had, as yet, no written traditions, no exact stylistic requirements, nor even formulated demands.

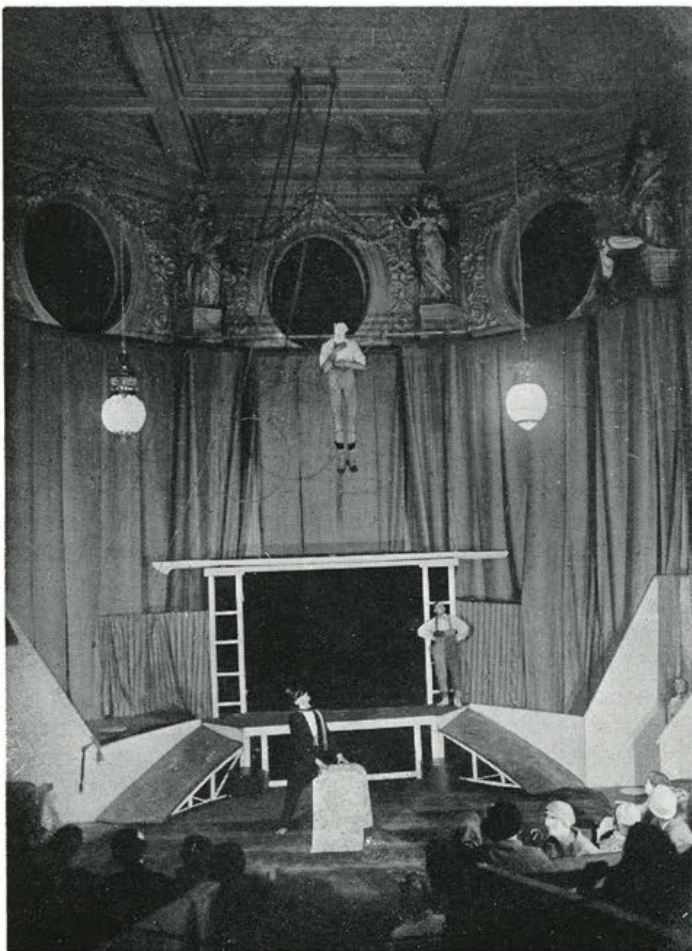
Usually my film career is said to have begun with my production of Ostrovsky's play, *Enough Simplicity in Every*

*Sage*, at the Proletcult Theatre (Moscow, March 1923). This is both true and untrue. It is not true if it is based solely on the fact that this production contained a short comic film made especially for it (not separate, but included in the montage plan of the spectacle). It is more nearly true if it is based on the character of the production, for we have agreed elsewhere that the first sign of a cinema tendency is one showing events with the least distortion, aiming at the factual reality of the fragments.

A search in this direction shows my film tendencies beginning three years earlier, in the production of *The Mexican* (from Jack London's story). Here, my participation brought into the theatre "events" themselves—purely a cinematographic element, as distinguished from "reactions to events"—which is a purely theatrical element.

This is the plot: A Mexican revolutionary group needs money for its activities. A boy, a Mexican, offers to find the money. He trains for boxing, and contracts to let the champion beat him for a fraction of the prize. Instead he beats





up the champion, winning the entire prize. Now that I am better acquainted with the specifics of the Mexican revolutionary struggle, not to mention the technique of boxing, I would not think of interpreting this material as we did in 1920, let alone using so unconvincing a plot.

The play's climax is the prize-fight. In accordance with the most hallowed Art Theatre traditions, this was to take place backstage (like the bull-fight in *Carmen*), while the actors on stage were to show excitement in the fight only they can see, as well as to portray the various emotions of the persons concerned in the outcome.

My first move (trespassing upon the director's job, since I was there in the official capacity of designer only) was to propose that the fight be brought into view. Moreover, I suggested that the scene be staged in the centre of the auditorium to re-create the same circumstances under which a real boxing match takes place. Thus we dared the concreteness of factual events. The fight was to be carefully planned in advance but was to be utterly realistic.

The playing of our young worker-actors in the fight scene differed radically from their acting elsewhere in the production. In every other scene, one emotion gave rise to a further emotion (they were working in the Stanislavsky system), which in turn was used as a means to affect the audience; but in the fight scene the audience was excited directly.

While the other scenes influenced the audience through intonation, gestures, and mimicry, our scene employed realistic, even textural means—real fighting, bodies crashing to the ring floor, panting, the shine of sweat on torsos, and finally, the unforgettable smacking of gloves against taut skin and strained muscles. Illusionary scenery gave way to a realistic ring (though not in the centre of the hall, thanks to that plague of every theatrical enterprise, the fireman) and extras closed the circle around the ring.

Thus my realisation that I had struck new ore, an actual-materialistic element in theatre. In *The Sage*, this element appeared on a new and clearer level. The eccentricity of the production exposed this same line, through fantastic contrasts. The tendency developed not only from illusionary acting movement, but from the physical fact of acrobatics. A gesture expands into gymnastics, rage is expressed through a somersault, exaltation through a *salto-mortale*, lyricism on "the mast of death". The grotesque of this style permitted leaps from one type of expression to another, as well as unexpected intertwinings of the two expressions. In a later production, *Listen, Moscow* (summer, 1923), these two separate lines of "real doing" and "pictorial imagination" went through a synthesis expressed in a specific technique of acting.

These two principles appeared again in Tretiakov's *Gas Masks* (1923-24), with still sharper irreconcilability, broken so noticeably that had this been a film it would have remained, as we say, "on the shelf".

What was the matter? The conflict between material-practical and fictitious-descriptive principles was somehow patched up in the melodrama, but here they broke up and we failed completely. The cart dropped to pieces, and its driver dropped into the cinema.

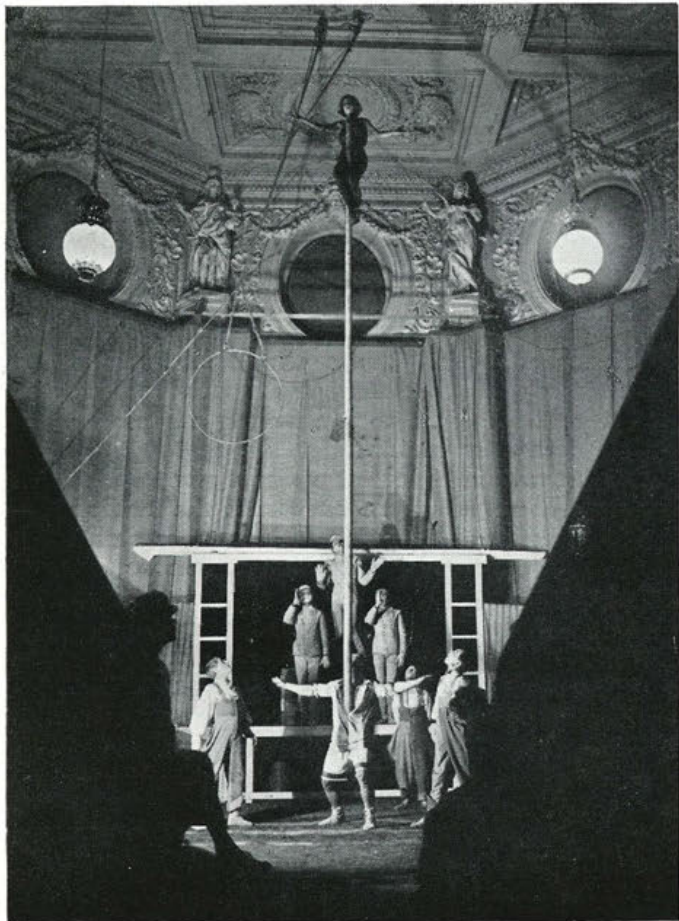
This all happened because one day the director had the marvellous idea of producing this play about a gas factory—in a real gas factory.

As we realised later, the real interiors of the factory had nothing to do with our theatrical fiction. At the same time the plastic charm of reality in the factory became so



## The Proletcult Theatre

The pictures opposite and on this page are from Ostrovsky's *Enough Simplicity in every Sage*, a production designed entirely by Eisenstein in 1923. The theatre was formerly a ballroom, traces of which can be seen: the players were workmen, and much of the action was improvised. Eisenstein was constantly experimenting in removing the formal barriers between stage and audience. For *The Mexican* he took part of the action right into the middle of the auditorium; here the stage three-quarters surrounded the audience, most of it on the ground level of the theatre, with a small raised platform at the back.





strong that the element of actuality rose with fresh strength—took things into its own hands—and finally had to leave an art where it could not command.

Thereby bringing us to the brink of the cinema.

But this is not the end of our adventures with theatre work. Having come to the screen, this other tendency flourished, and became known as "typage". This "typage" is just as typical a feature of this cinema period as "montage". And be it known that I do not want to limit the concept of "typage" or "montage" to my own works.

I want to point out that "typage" must be understood as broader than merely a face without make-up, or a substitution of "naturally expressive" types for actors. In my opinion, "typage" included a specific approach to the events embraced by the content of the film. Here again was the method of least interference with the natural course and combinations of events. In concept, from beginning to end, *October* is pure "typage".

A typage tendency may be rooted in theatre; growing out of the theatre into film, it presents possibilities for excellent stylistic growth, in a broad sense—as an indicator of definite affinities to real life through the camera.

And now let us examine the second feature of film-specifics, the principles of montage. How was this expressed and shaped in my work before joining the cinema?

In the midst of the flood of eccentricity in *The Sage*, including a short film comedy, we can find the first hints of a sharply expressed montage.

The action moves through an elaborate tissue of intrigues. Mamayev sends his nephew, Glumov, to his wife as guardian. Glumov takes liberties beyond his uncle's instructions and his aunt takes the courtship seriously. At the same time Glumov begins to negotiate for a marriage with Mamayev's niece, Turussina, but conceals these intentions from the aunt, Mamayeva. Courting the aunt, Glumov deceives the uncle; flattering the uncle, Glumov arranges with him the deception of the aunt.

Glumov, on a comic plane, echoes the situations, the overwhelming passions, the thunder of finance, that his French prototype, Balzac's Rastignac, experiences. Rastignac's type in Russia was still in the cradle. Money-making was still a sort of child's game between uncles and nephews, aunts and their gallants. It remains in the family, and remains trivial. Hence, the comedy. But the intrigue and entanglements are already present, playing on two fronts at the same time—with both hands—with dual characters . . . and we showed all this with an intertwined montage of two different scenes (of Mamayev giving his instructions, and of Glumov putting them into execution). The surprising intersections of the two dialogues sharpen the characters and the play, quicken the tempo, and multiply the comic possibilities.

For the production of *The Sage* the stage was shaped like a circus arena, edged with a red barrier, and three-quarters surrounded by the audience. The other quarter was hung with a striped curtain, in front of which stood a small raised platform several steps high. The scene with Mamayev (Shtraukh) took place downstage while the Mamayeva (Yanukova) fragments occurred on the platform. Instead of changing scenes, Glumov (Yezikanov) ran from one scene to the other and back—taking a fragment of dialogue from one scene, interrupting it with a fragment from another scene—the dialogue thus colliding, creating new meanings and sometimes wordplays. Glu-

mov's leaps acted as *caesurae* between the dialogue fragments.

And the "cutting" increased in tempo. What was most interesting was that the extreme sharpness of the eccentricity was not torn from the context of this part of the play; it never became comical just for comedy's sake, but stuck to its theme, sharpened by its scenic embodiment.

Another distinct film feature at work here was the new meaning acquired by common phrases in a new environment.

Everyone who has had in his hands a piece of film to be edited knows by experience how neutral it remains, even though a part of a planned sequence, until it is joined with another piece, when it suddenly acquires and conveys a sharper and quite different meaning than that planned for it at the time of filming.

This was the foundation of that wise and wicked art of re-editing the work of others, the most profound examples of which can be found during the dawn of our cinematography, when all the master film editors—Esther Schub, the Vassiliyev brothers, Benjamin Boitler, and Birrois—were engaged in reworking ingeniously the films imported after the revolution.

I cannot resist the pleasure of citing here one montage *tour de force* of this sort, executed by Boitler. One film brought from Germany was *Danton*, with Emil Jannings. As released on our screens, this scene was shown: Camille Desmoulins is condemned to the guillotine. Greatly agitated, Danton rushes to Robespierre, who turns aside and slowly wipes away a tear. The sub-title said, approximately, "In the name of freedom I had to sacrifice a friend . . ." Fine.

But who could have guessed that in the German original, Danton, represented as an idler, a petticoat-chaser, a splendid chap and the only positive figure in the midst of evil characters, that this Danton ran to the evil Robespierre and . . . spat in his face? And that it was this spit that Robespierre wiped from his face with a handkerchief? And that the title indicated Robespierre's hatred of Danton, a hate that in the end of the film motivates the condemnation of Jannings-Danton to the guillotine?

Two tiny cuts reversed the entire significance of this scene!

Where did my montage experiment in these scenes of *The Sage* come from?

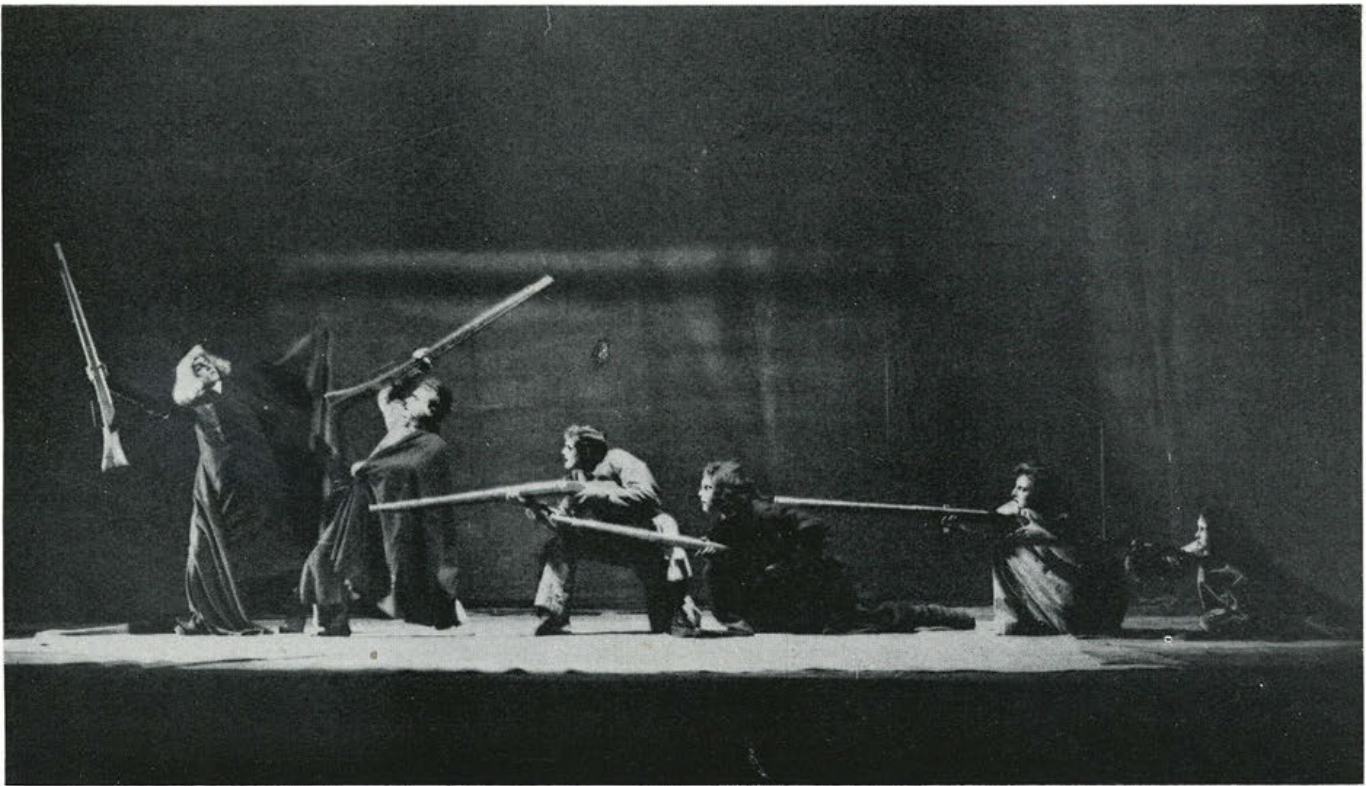
There was already an "aroma" of montage in the new "left" cinema, particularly among the documentalists. Our replacement of Glumov's diary in Ostrovsky's text with a short "film-diary" was itself a parody on the first experiments with news-reels.

I think that first and foremost we must give all the credit to the basic principles of the circus and the music-hall—for which I had had a passionate love since childhood. Under the influence of the French comedians, and of Chaplin (of whom we had only heard), and the first news of the fox-trot and jazz, this early love thrived.

The music hall element was obviously needed at the time for the emergence of a "montage" form of thought. Harlequin's parti-coloured costume grew and spread, first over the structure of the programme, and finally into the method of the whole production.

But the background extended more deeply into tradition. Strangely enough, it was Flaubert who gave us one of the finest examples of cross-montage in dialogues, used with the same intention of expressive sharpening of idea. This





Another scene from "*The Mexican*".

is the scene in *Madame Bovary* where Emma and Rodolphe grow more intimate. Two lines of speech are interlaced: the speech of the orators and the conversation of the lovers. Literature is full of such examples. This method is used with increasing popularity by Flaubert's artistic heirs.

Our pranks in regard to Ostrovsky remained on an "avant garde" level of an indubitable nakedness. But this seed of montage tendencies grew quickly and splendidly in *Patatra*, which remained a project through lack of an adequate hall and technical possibilities. The production was planned with "chase tempos", quick changes of action, scene intersections and simultaneous playing of several scenes on a stage that surrounded an auditorium of revolving seats. Another even earlier project attempted to embrace the entire theatre building in its composition. This was broken up during rehearsals and later produced by other hands as a purely theatrical conception. It was the Pletnev play, *Precipice*, which Smishlayev and I worked on, following *The Mexican*, until we disagreed on principles and dissolved our partnership. (When I returned to Prolecut a year later, to do *The Sage*, it was as a director, although I continued to design my own productions.)

*Precipice* contains a scene where an inventor, thrilled by his new invention, runs like Archimedes about the city (or perhaps he was being chased by gangsters—I don't remember exactly). The task was to solve the dynamics of city streets as well as to show the helplessness of an individual at the mercy of the "big city". (Our mistaken

imaginings about Europe naturally led us to the false concept of "urbanism".)

An amusing combination occurred to me, not only to use running scenery—pieces of buildings and details (Meyerhold had not yet worked out, for his *Trust D.E.*, the neutral polished shields, *murs mobiles*, to unify several places of action)—but also, possibly under the demands of shifting scenery, to connect these moving decorations with people. The actors on roller skates carried not only themselves about the stage, but also their "piece of city". Our solution of the problem—the intersection of man and milieu—was undoubtedly influenced by the principles of the cubists. But the "urbanistic" paintings of Picasso were of less importance here than the need to express the dynamics of the city—glimpses of façades, hands, legs, pillars, heads, domes. All of this can be found in Gogol's work, but we did not notice that until Andrei Belyi enlightened us about the special cubism of Gogol. I still remember the four legs of two bankers, supporting the façade of the stock exchange, with two top hats crowning the whole. There was also a policeman, sliced and quartered with traffic. Costumes blazing with perspectives of twirling lights, with only great rouged lips visible above. These all remained on paper—and now that even the paper has gone, we may become quite apathetically lyrical in our reminiscences.

These close-ups cut into views of a city become another link in our analysis, a film element that tried to fit itself into the stubborn stage. Here are also the elements of double and multiple exposure—"superimposing" images



of man on to images of buildings—all an attempt to interrelate man and his milieu in a single complicated display. (The fact that the film *Strike* was full of this sort of complexity proves the “infantile malady of leftism” existing in these first steps of cinema.)

Out of mechanical fusion, from plastic synthesis, the attempt evolves into thematic synthesis. In *Strike* there is more than a transformation into the technique of the camera. The composition and structure of the film as a whole achieves the effect and sensation of uninterrupted unity between the collective and the milieu that creates the collective. And the organic unity of sailors, battleships, and sea that is shown in plastic and thematic cross-section in *Potemkin* is not by trickery or double-exposure or mechanical intersection, but by the general structure of the composition. But in the theatre, the impossibility of the *mise-en-scène* unfolding throughout the auditorium, fusing stage and audience in a developing pattern, was the reason for the concentrated absorption of the *mise-en-scène* problems within the scenic action.

The almost geometrically conventional *mise-en-scène* of *The Sage* and its formal sequel, *Listen, Moscow*, becomes one of the basic elements of expression. The montage intersection eventually became too emphatically exact. The composition singled out groups, shifted the spectator's attention from one point to another, presented close-ups, a hand holding a letter, the play of eyebrows, a glance. The technique of genuine *mise-en-scène* composition was being mastered—and approaching its limits. It was already threatened with becoming the knight's move in chess, the shift of purely plastic contours in the already non-theatrical outlines of detailed drawings.

Sculptural details seen through the frame of the *cadre*, or shot, transitions from shot to shot, appeared to be the logical way out for the threatened hypertrophy of the *mise-en-scène*. Theoretically, it established our dependence on *mise-en-scène* and montage. Pedagogically, it determined, for the future, the approaches to montage and cinema, arrived at through the mastering of theatrical construction and through the art of *mise-en-scène*. Thus was born the concept of *mise-en-cadre*. As the *mise-en-scène* is an interrelation of people in action, so the *mise-en-cadre* is the pictorial composition of mutually dependent *cadres* (shots) in a montage sequence.

In *Gas Masks* we see all the elements of film tendencies meeting. The turbines, the factory background, negated the last remnants of make-up and theatrical costumes, and all the elements appeared as independently fused. Theatre accessories in the midst of real factory plastics appeared ridiculous. The element of “play” was incompatible with the acrid smell of gas. The pitiful platform kept getting lost among the real platforms of labour activity. In short, the production was a failure. And we found ourselves in the cinema.

Our first film opus, *Strike* (1924-25), reflected, as in a mirror, in reverse, our production of *Gas Masks*. But the

film floundered about in the flotsam of a rank theatricality that had become alien to it.

At the same time, the break with the theatre in principle was so sharp that in my “revolt against the theatre” I did away with a very vital element of theatre—the story.

At that time this seemed natural. We brought collective and mass action on to the screen, in contrast to individualism and the “triangle” drama of the bourgeois cinema. Discarding the individualist conception of the bourgeois hero, our films of this period made an abrupt deviation—insisting on an understanding of the mass as hero.

No screen had ever before reflected an image of collective action. Now the conception of “collectivity” was to be pictured. But our enthusiasm produced a one-sided representation of the masses and the collective; one-sided because collectivism means the maximum development of the individual within the collective, a conception irreconcilably opposed to bourgeois individualism. Our first mass film missed this deeper meaning.

Still, I am sure that for its period this deviation was not only natural but necessary. It was important that the screen be first penetrated by the general image, the collective united and propelled by one wish. “Individuality within the collective”, the deeper meaning, demanded of cinema to-day, would have found entrance almost impossible if the way had not been cleared by the general concept.

In 1924 I wrote, with immense zeal: “Down with the story and the plot!” To-day, the story, which then seemed to be almost “an attack of individualism” upon our revolutionary cinema, returns in a fresh form, to its proper place. In this turn towards the story lies the historical importance of the third half-decade of Soviet cinematography (1930-1935).

And here, as we begin our fourth five-year period of cinema, when abstract discussions of the epigones of the “story” film and the embryones of the “plotless” films are calming down, is it time to take an inventory of our credits and debits.

I consider that besides mastering the elements of filmic diction, the technique of the frame, and the theory of montage, we have another credit to our list—the value of profound ties with the traditions and methodology of literature. Not in vain, during this period was the new concept of film-language born, film-language not as an expression of cinema thinking, when the cinema was called upon to embody the philosophy and ideology of the victorious proletariat.

Stretching out its hands to the new quality of literature—the dramatics of subject—the cinema cannot forget the tremendous experience of its earlier periods. But the way is not back to them, but forward to the synthesis of all the best that has been done by our silent cinematography, towards a synthesis of these with the demands of to-day, along the lines of story and Marxist-Leninist ideological analysis. The phase of monumental synthesis in the images of the people of the epoch of socialism—the phase of socialist realism.



# Documentary

## "LET'S WAIT TILL THE BIG PICTURE STARTS"

Adrian Reid

*This is the first of a series of four articles on short film production. The articles will cover both the economic and the creative side of the problems involved, dealing with the short film industry as a whole, drawing comparisons with other countries, and the emphasis will be on the outlook for the independent maker of short films to-day. Adrian Reid is a producer of entertainment shorts and his company (Faro Films Ltd.) has recently completed three films about life and traditions in Italy—the first of several to be made on various European countries.*

ONCE WHEN I HEARD this remark, "Let's wait till the big picture starts", I took a look at the programme displayed in the cinema concerned. There were four items beside the big picture. One was a newsreel; the others bore no descriptions. All you could tell, from the times of showings displayed against them, was that they were "shorts".

The titles seemed quite intriguing, of the kind that might attract people—unless the people were prejudiced beforehand against the whole idea of a supporting programme. And the fact that so many people *are* prejudiced against this idea is due to the quality of the short films which, for many years, have been exhibited to form the supporting programmes in cinemas. This is mainly the producers' fault.

There is one basic fact that must be realised before discussing the supporting film. The supporting film is not, like the feature film, a natural growth. It is a by-product of the film, as the egg-cup is to the egg. The egg-cup came into being to assist the process of egg-eating—if eggs disappeared, egg-cup makers would be out of business. So with the supporting film. To talk about an independent art-form is inexact: an art is born naturally, but the short film was created to meet conditions.

This egg-cup, however, this utility, showed itself surprisingly unwilling to remain a utility. It showed itself capable of a surprising variety of forms. To at least some of these forms, artists and craftsmen were attracted, and they devoted time and care to their development. For instance, the programme which cinemagoers may miss by waiting for the big picture might include any of the following distinct types of films. These are:

The cartoon ("Silly Symphonies", etc.).

The "Entertainment"—singers, dance-bands, comics, an equivalent to the variety act.

The "Travelogue"—round the world with Fitzpatrick—and others, who take longer.

The social documentary—"Juvenile Delinquency" is a good example.

The "interest" film—how an eel is caught, or a visit to a brick works. Ten minutes, as somebody once remarked, of things you would never stop and look at yourself if you happened to be passing.

The "Reportage"—corresponds roughly to the news article in journalism, although it need not necessarily be topical. "Reportage" films are usually magazines, such as *This Modern Age*.

It is reasonable to suppose that, just as there are novels and short stories in literature, there might be short story feature films. But the medium has remained undeveloped—

M.G.M. sponsored a few in America at one time, in Europe there have been such isolated examples as *Partie de Campagne*. In England, the production of short story films has been confined almost entirely to amateur units.

Of the seven major categories, some have been more guilty of serious upsetting the public than others. The cartoon is exonerated right away: some West End cinemas have made up entire programmes from them and packed the house. Because the cartoon film is largely the result of technical processes, its quality is sure to be at least professional. This standardised success has, of course, discouraged experiment: the cartoon seldom attracts the amateur, the optimist or the shoestring producer.

The same point about professional quality applies also to "Entertainments" or featurettes. Most of the ones we see here are American, and they are usually a by-product of the major studios, employing the same technicians and artists. They are firmly grounded in show business.

Documentaries? There have been too few of them in public cinemas. The film which has something of sociological importance to say has owed its existence almost entirely to sponsorship. This has ensured its survival, but not its wide public recognition. "Reportages", or at least the magazine-type film, have been proved popular, however, in a recent poll.

This leaves the travelogue and the interest film—the real culprits, in fact. Their history goes back to the first Quota Act. British-made supporting films were suddenly in demand by renters and exhibitors: the margin of profit, though small, was comparatively safe. There was no question of depending for a good return on the fickleness of public taste. Technical quality was unimportant, because quota shorts were something the cinemas had to have, like safety curtains. Unscrupulous producers cashed in, mainly with travelogues and interest films.

These films were favoured because, for the producer without ideas, who considered the process of exposing film for exhibition on a par with that of smoking kippers for fish-shop sales, they afforded the line of least resistance. Nothing really creative was needed. The material was there, and you simply photographed it. You covered the local brick-works and served it up as an interest film. You took a camera on a holiday abroad and came back with ten travelogues in the bag. (Ten initially, that is: any good cutter could get a further ten later on, by interchanging commentary and material.)

The quality of many films produced in this way was indeed shameful. "Everything bar the clapper-board" was the motto—and, it is said, even the clapper-board has





"Goemons", an outstanding French documentary about a Breton community, prized at Venice, not yet shown outside France. Directed by Yannick Bellon.

been known to flash on the screen from time to time. If the camera fell off the tripod in the middle of a pan, the first part of the pan went in. Profit was profit, and every foot of film counted.

Producers gambled on public apathy, and for a long time they were successful. There are signs now that the public is extremely bored with supporting trash, but also that it still likes supporting films in principle. This emerged from an inquiry held recently by the *Daily Express* critic, Leonard Mosley, in the columns of his paper. He asked his readers: "Are you weary of second features?" The answer, by a large majority, was Yes. People expressed a clear preference for various types of supporting film—but please, said the public, let them be better.

This news is gratifying to serious-minded producers of short films. But there are still many obstacles. With the problems of economics and production I shall deal in a later article—let us, for the moment, assume that all things are equal. What can the producers best do to please the public?

Cartoons are a specialised and technical form of production, for which the first requirements are good artists rather than good producers. Entertainments are best left to large studios, if they are not to become merely shoddy, although independent French producers have made them with success. The social documentary is an unknown quantity; at least it has not got to live down excesses of the past. But, with the existence of the C.O.I. and a number of experienced units, there is less need for independent reform here than in other spheres.

The straight travelogue should be abolished. For one thing, the public has seen so many bad ones that the very name has fallen into disrepute. For another, nearly every place on earth has been filmed, and the original justification for the travelogue, that it brought to the screen the glamour of faraway places, has been removed. Also, this bringing to the screen of faraway places in two reels was never good cinema. Such things are better suited to the picture-book or the lantern-lecture. There is no development, no movement. There may be incidental movement—people in the streets or goats on the mountain beauty spot—but it is movement that can be conveyed just as well by the good still photograph. It is not movement that carries a story

forward, for there is no story to carry forward. The subject is static—to be given life it needs the drama of personal impression, which results not in an illustrated guidebook but in a film like *Song of Ceylon* or *People in the City*.

Interest films should also be abolished. They are nothing but half-hearted popular versions of subjects suitable for a specialised audience. They make the worst of both worlds—the material is diluted and dressed up with a facetious commentary or humorous "touches", and as a result cannot be taken seriously but still fails to be entertaining. Who cares, on the "interest" level, about brick-works, eel-catching, or what happens to a letter between posting and delivery?

The best hope for the future of the supporting film lies, I believe, in the Reportage and the short story. The material is practically inexhaustible—real glimpses of other happenings, other lives, instead of superficial accounts of the picturesque: the latter is the stock-in-trade of the interest film, but the former is rarely attempted. And the short story: in the commercial cinema some short stories have been filmed, but always in groups, after the manner of *Quartet* or *Flesh and Fantasy*. There is surely a great opportunity to make and release such stories separately.

The short story film is all the more attractive because the feature industry is now a closed shop. It is not possible for a man with a sense of vocation to enter it, even by working his way up from the bottom until he achieves his aim of directing a picture. If this persists, one wonders (when all the present editors, assistants and so on who believe they can direct or produce good pictures have had a chance to do so) from where the film industry will get its new talent. A lively supporting film industry would provide an excellent source. At the moment it is not particularly lively, but it is still open and informal. Chances can still be taken on talent, because failure does not mean a major financial disaster. And the making of supporting films could offer an outlet for every kind of film talent.

That is why it is essential to regain public interest. For if the public continues to see supporting programmes composed mainly of celluloid junk, it will sooner or later move for them to be discontinued or replaced by a second feature. If that happens, the film industry as a whole will suffer a severe and perhaps dangerous loss.



# CINEMA AND TELEVISION

Jean Quéval

IT IS DIFFICULT not to begin by saying the obvious. Television is primarily akin to radio inasmuch as it is a family affair. True enough, television was at one time shown in cinemas in the United States in order to enable such theatres to profit from instantaneous reports, by outside broadcast, of sporting or other events. In France, shy attempts have been made to widen the range of television by public showings in a few shops and cafes, but this experiment gives very little promise either. Indeed, there seems to be little hope of having television outside the home, where it is by nature intended to be shown and where in all likelihood it has come to stay.

But although radio and television are similar in this respect, they are bound to differ in that the latter draws still more, by adding sight to sound, from other entertainments—the theatre, ballet, concerts, pantomime, cabaret and puppet shows—generally with a view to altering them to meet the demands of the medium so that they may in fact become works of a different nature. Whether to use these other entertainments in the raw or to transform them into genuine television is indeed a question which applies particularly in the case of film. This is due, of course, to the fact that television, akin to the radio because of the family audience, is akin to the cinema because of the screen. To which it must be added that showing cinema films is the simplest way to clear the studios for the vast amount of rehearsals called for by television productions.

Indeed cinema films are the raw material for television, and provide it with from one- to two-thirds of its programmes, according to the country and the company. One obvious reason why this is anything but a satisfactory state of affairs is because of the cold war between the film industry and television, a war led by the exhibitors and bluntly referred to in a recent issue of a trade paper as:

“Theatre v T.V.” It has by now assumed almost the proportions of a private class war in England and France, for it looks in both countries as if the exhibitors, representing private enterprise and as such followed by the more responsible sections of the industry (i.e. producers and distributors) are determined to prevent the more or less state-controlled television organisations from making use of whatever films have been, are or will be, good commercially. In this respect, however, the French business people are willing to co-operate occasionally with producers whom they think will usefully advertise their films, in which case they will lend extracts. I understand that the British industry’s policy is more rigid. Such a situation explains why television is making use of so many old and bad films. But although serious enough, this is only by the way.

The root of the trouble is that films made for the cinema are naturally not meant for the family audiences of television. Temporary material reasons have to do with it—the fact, for instance, that films in colour cannot as yet be televised, and that appalling results are obtained simply because the television screen generally differs in *proportion* from that of the cinema. Such impediments will be removed in time. But the different *dimensions* of both screens will obviously remain. The sizes of television receivers vary, but of necessity most sets will have to be reasonably small to suit the average home and its intimacy. As has been pertinently pointed out by Frank Tilsley, intimacy is indeed the motto of the new medium. Hence television is allergic to the formula and the apparatus of films with exotic settings and crowded with extras; to films in which pace plays a decisive part in the narrative. Oddly enough, the slower rhythm needed makes animated cartoons, despite the homely, humorous appeal one would



Possible subjects for television. Yvonne de Bray in “Les Parents Terribles”, and John Dall, Farley Granger, James Stewart in “Rope”.



expect them to have on the family, possibly less successful on television than anything else. As mentioned before, it all started from the sheer necessity to clear studios for rehearsals of live productions and fill up a (roughly) four hours' daily programme. This simple conclusion, that films produced for the cinema generally make bad television, might indeed have been formulated beforehand. I say *generally*, for there are exceptions. I believe that certain cinema sequences make good television for a variety of reasons. Let me more or less suggest some examples, rather at random: *Les parents terribles*, because of the use of close-up and the neat, if ambiguous dialogue; *The Overlanders*, which combines adventure with the almost homely trust we have in the characters, and because it gives a feeling of greater security to the viewer by way of contrast, a feeling experienced by armchair detectives; possible excerpts from *Rope*, or *Citizen Kane*, or *The Magnificent Ambersons*, where a "shot" is extended to the length of a reel and where deep focus and lighting contrive to make one fully conscious of a certain room, of all there is in it, of all that is happening in it.

Such exceptions have given birth to a tentative approach reminiscent of the film society outlook. I have in mind a French series produced by Pierre Viallet on film directors, the title of which, *Les rois de la nuit*, borders on overstatement. Undeniably a sympathetic approach. But there is no arguing that the genuine possibilities of such tele-editing of films produced for the cinema are so limited as to make the whole genre, ingenious as it is, hazardous and parenthetical. Starting from this sorry process of trial and error, which has conclusively shown what was not wanted, some most constructive ideas have been elaborated.

French producers now believe that a good film specially made for television must comply with a number of simple rules, such as: have each setting firmly established and avoid frequent changes from one to the other; try to keep the narrative going in each sequence by close-up to close-up; use only a limited number of shots; be careful to avoid all disturbing skilful technicalities such as reversed angles; spare changes in tempo. I hear from Mr. Dorté, who is in charge of films and outside broadcasts at Alexandra Palace, that such precisely are the views that he has come to after a much more conclusive experience than his French colleagues (French Television having started on a reasonably ambitious scale only a few months ago).

Certainly what is specific in a television film is a very long way from what is specific in cinema. In this respect, I remember Jean-Paul Sartre telling me that it is possible, and it ought to be almost the rule, to show convincingly on the screen the simultaneity of events occurring in places wide apart. Perhaps this theory of the ubiquity of the cinema could only be formulated dogmatically by an experimental novelist of this age; but whatever may be said in favour of the adverse theory once expounded by René Clair, to the effect that a good film ought to be strictly located, concern a limited number of characters and cover a short

period of time, undeniably ubiquity is one of the most obvious and less explored potentialities of cinema narrative. Television proposes instead a vastly more conservative outlook. It is more akin to conversation in a train between travellers previously unknown to us, than to the discovery of places they are bound for or have visited. Similarly, the mythology and the heroes of the cinema are not to be adopted by television, the main merit of which being, as I see it, to reveal to us more human and neighbourly faces.

All this, alas, is of a rather academic character. It seems at present highly unlikely that feature films comparable in scope and ambition to those shown on the cinema screen will ever be attempted by television producers. The new medium must satisfy the need of a vast audience for a new daily programme and is thus to be compared to journalism. For that reason, it is difficult to imagine how the vast sums necessary for the production of long feature films, to be shown only once, or possibly twice, could be spent by any responsible organisation.

Finally, it seems that films for television will serve three main purposes. They will give—as indeed they do already—the broad location to cabaret shows or theatre plays supposedly taking place in some remote country. Secondly, short or medium documentary films of a limited character can and are being produced. Thirdly come the television newsreels, more appropriately referred to as *actualities*.

From the vast evidence collected by the B.B.C., it appears that viewers prefer these actualities to everything else, and rightly so. There is little denying that television is doing that particular job better than the cinema. For one thing, it is being shown twice a week—soon thrice—in England, and daily in France, although, I am sorry to say, with so far infinitely less polish (for very excusable reasons). We have only to think of the weekly cinema newsreel to realise the improvement. There is certainly room for congratulation here on the ground of *actuality*. On the other hand, its scope is limited. If we are to infer any conclusions from this, they will be that, in this field at least, there is ample ground for co-operation between television and the film industry, the latter supplying the former with events which take place in remote parts of this world—"one world" as Wendell Wilkie rightly calls it. Such co-operation already exists both nationally and internationally. It remains to be discovered how cinema newsreels can be introduced into television without the difference in technique and outlook being perceived. But that television might well become this window on the world, proudly so called by Maurice Gorham, is undeniable.

Actuality really takes place, however, when filming is not in question. I have in mind the outside broadcasts, which provided, for example, an admirable showing of the Olympic Games, and which practically suppress all commentary, and indeed *reporting*, and which leave the events to speak for themselves. Sight and sound it is, but nevertheless outside this province.



## SIGHT AND SOUND'S GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

*As from this month we are beginning a regular summary, for the convenience of readers, of the main films now showing in London and the provinces. Last-minute changes of programmes after our press-date may cause one or two inaccuracies, but we hope this list may serve as a useful general guide.*

### LONDON

**ALL THE KING'S MEN.** Robert Rossen's award winning picture about the rise to power of an American political tycoon turns out to be something of a disappointment: honest, serious, but over-long and pedestrian. (Broderick Crawford, Joanne Dru, John Ireland, Mercedes McCambridge.)

**BERLINER BALLADE.** Cabaret-style satire on present-day Germany. Too much cynicism and self pity, but some brilliantly funny moments. (Gert Frobe: director, R. A. Stemmle.)

**EAST SIDE, WEST SIDE.** Leisurely study of emotional tangles of New York socialites; fundamentally common-place, but distinguished in presentation and acting. (Barbara Stanwyck, James Mason, Ava Gardner: director, Mervyn LeRoy.)

**INSPECTOR GENERAL.** Patchy Danny Kaye extravaganza based, but very remotely, on the play by Gogol. (Walter Slezak, Elsa Lanchester: director, Henry Koster.)

**JOUR DE FETE.** Charming, unpretentious and effervescent French comedy, centred on a village fair, and introducing a new comedian, Jacques Tati, who also directed.

**ON THE TOWN.** Musical made with immense verve, energy and speed. Much was shot on location in New York, and the film breaks right away from established musical conventions, gaining immeasurably in life and excitement. (Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Vera Ellen, Ann Miller: directors, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen.)

**PARENTS TERRIBLES, Les.** Cocteau's version of his own play is a powerful study of the disintegration of a family. Brilliantly done, without a single exterior shot, the film produces a claustrophobic and oppressive feeling which matches the mood of the story. (Jean Marais, Yvonne de Bray, Josette Day, Gabrielle Dorziat.)

**RETOUR A LA VIE.** Five episodes about the returning French soldier and his postwar problems. Rather undistinguished. (Jouvet, Reggiani, Noel-Noel, Patricia Roc. Directors: Clouzot, Dreville, Lampin, Cayatte.)

**UNDER MY SKIN.** Two distinguished players, John Garfield and Micheline Presle, wasted in a flatfooted adaptation of a Hemingway story about a jockey. (Director, Jean Negulesco.)

**YOUNG MAN OF MUSIC.** The story of the rise and fall (and last-minute redemption) of a jazz trumpeter. A good subject rather seriously compromised, but with some impressive scenes in between box office concessions. (Kirk Douglas, Lauren Bacall, Doris Day, Hoagy Carmichael: director, Michael Curtiz.)

### THE PROVINCES

**ADAM'S RIB.** Light and polished comedy in which a husband and wife, both attorneys, find themselves on opposite sides in a courtroom. Quite amusing, and expertly played. (Katharine Hepburn, Spencer Tracy, Judy Holliday: director, George Cukor.)

**ANGEL WITH THE TRUMPET, The.** Feebly made and rather long-winded Viennese family history. Chiefly distinguished for providing Eileen Herlie with her first starring part. (Norman Wooland, Basil Sydney: director, Anthony Bushell.)

**ASTONISHED HEART, The.** An astonishing Noel Coward drawing room drama about the unfortunate love life of a fashionable psychiatrist, with Celia Johnson as a long-suffering wife and Margaret Leighton as a glamorous intruder. Dated and highly artificial. (Directors: Anthony Darnborough, Terence Fisher.)

**BATTLEGROUND.** An episode of the Battle of the Bulge, admirably staged but completely superficial. (Van Johnson, John Hodiak: director, William Wellman.)

**BEAUTIFUL BLONDE FROM BASHFUL BEND, The.** New Preston Sturges comedy, with Betty Grable as a sharp-shooting saloon singer on the run and mistaken for the new school mistress in a remote Western village. Some good moments, but mainly below par. Technicolor.

**BLACK MAGIC.** Extravagant and confused charade about Cagliostro, made on location in Italy. (Orson Welles, Nancy Guild, Valentina Cortese: director, Gregory Ratoff.)

**HAPPIEST DAYS OF YOUR LIFE.** Engaging British farce about a girl's school billeted by mistake on a boy's school, with Alastair Sim and Margaret Rutherford at their best as headmaster and headmistress respectively. (Director: Frank Launder.)

**MADELEINE.** David Lean's version of the mysterious story of Madeleine Smith, living in Victorian Glasgow, who may or may not have poisoned her French lover. Slow, correct, and disappointingly synthetic. (Ann Todd, Norman Wooland, Ivan Desny.)

**MORNING DEPARTURE.** Discreet, competent British film about the submarine service in peace time, with a situation reminiscent of the recent *Truculent* disaster. Its stage origins show through most of the time. (John Mills, Richard Attenborough: director, Roy Baker.)

**MY FOOLISH HEART.** Glossy, Goldwyn-produced novelette about the brief romance of a girl and a flier who is killed during the war. (Susan Hayward, Dana Andrews: director, Mark Robson.)

**RECKLESS MOMENT, The.** An adolescent girl's infatuation with a philanderer nearly leads to disaster for her middle-class, small-town family. Brilliantly directed, well acted, though the script falters in the second half. (James Mason, Joan Bennett, Geraldine Brooks: director, Max Ophüls.)

**RIDING HIGH.** Capra's latest comedy, a re-make of his own *Broadway Bill*: a race track setting. Retailored to fit Bing Crosby, the result is an expert but over-long concoction.

**THEY WERE NOT DIVIDED.** An epic story of the Welsh Guards, centred mainly on the final break-through into Germany, and the friendship of two officers, English and American: diffuse, uneven, for the most part falsely sentimental. (Edward Underdown: director, Terence Young.)

**THREE CAME HOME.** The story of an American woman imprisoned in a Japanese concentration camp during the war: reduced for the most part to novelette level. (Claudette Colbert, Sessue Hayakawa: director, Jean Negulesco.)

**WILLIE COMES MARCHING HOME, When.** A Sturges-type subject about an American soldier who gets parachuted by mistake into France and becomes a hero. Half-hearted satire on American small town patriotism and American films about occupied Europe. Lacking in punch. (Dan Dailey, Corinne Calvet: director, John Ford.)

**WOMAN IN HIDING.** Protracted chase picture, with Ida Lupino on the run from a murderous husband. Very routine thrills. (Howard Duff, Stephen McNally: director Michael Gordon.)



## COMPETITION

*Results of No. 1.* Of a large entry, about two dozen were correct. The answers were: top, left to right—Myrna Loy, Fredric March, Olivia de Havilland; bottom—Bette Davis, Henry Fonda, Ida Lupino. Book tokens for the first correct entries opened have been sent to Miss M. J. Lloyd, of 101 Manchester Road, Ince, near Wigan (25s.), and to Mr. M. R. Webb, of 28 Avonmore Road, West Kensington, W.14 (10s. 6d.). Myrna Loy and Fredric March were identified by most competitors, but Ida Lupino defeated many: she was given 14 different identities, including Hedy Lamarr, Loretta

Young, Deanna Durbin, Lana Turner and Zasu Pitts. And someone thought Bette Davis was Betty Grable.

*No. 3.* How many filmgoers can identify well-known film directors? Six directors are here introduced whose films are probably more familiar than their faces. Usual prizes for the first and second entries to be opened. Closing date, May 15th. Entries to SIGHT AND SOUND, British Film Institute, 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2, with "Competition" marked on top left-hand corner of envelope.





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